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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



September 2012

Vol. 117, No. 9

THE ROAD TO WISDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON *Divine Love – I*



It is impossible to express the nature of this supreme and absolute ideal of love in human language. Even the highest flight of human imagination is incapable of comprehending it in all its infinite perfection and beauty. Nevertheless, the followers of the religion of love, in its higher as well as its lower forms, in all countries, have all along had to use the inadequate human language to comprehend and to define their own ideal of love. Nay more, human love itself, in all its varied forms has been made to typify this inexpressible divine love.

Some of the great writers on Para-Bhakti have tried to understand and experience this divine love in so many different ways. The lowest form in which this love is apprehended is what they call the peaceful—the Shanta. When a man worships God without the fire of love in him, without its madness in his brain, when his love is just the calm commonplace love, a little higher than mere forms and ceremonies and symbols, but not at all characterised by the madness of intensely active love, it is said to be Shanta.

The next higher type is that of Dasya, i.e. servanthip; it comes when a man thinks he

is the servant of the Lord. The attachment of the faithful servant unto the master is his ideal.

The next type of love is Sakhya, friendship—‘Thou art our beloved friend’. Just as a man opens his heart to his friend and knows that the friend will never chide him for his faults but will always try to help him, just as there is the idea of equality between him and his friend, so equal love flows in and out between the worshipper and his friendly God. God is viewed here as our playmate.

The next is what is known as Vatsalya, loving God not as our Father but as our Child. This may look peculiar, but it is a discipline to enable us to detach all ideas of power from the concept of God. The idea of power brings with it awe. There should be no awe in love. To conceive God as mighty, majestic, and glorious, as the Lord of the universe, or as the God of gods, the lover says he does not care. It is to avoid this association with God of the fear-creating sense of power that he worships God as his own child.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 3.93.



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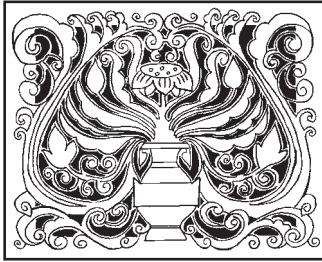


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Amrita Kalasha

EDITORIAL OFFICE

Prabuddha Bharata
Advaita Ashrama
PO Mayavati, Via Lohaghat
Dt Champawat · 262 524
Uttarakhand, India
E-mail: prabuddhabharata@gmail.com
pb@advaitaashrama.org

PUBLICATION OFFICE

Advaita Ashrama
5 Dehi Entally Road
Kolkata · 700 014
Tel: 91 · 33 · 2264 0898 / 2264 4000
2286 6450 / 2286 6483
E-mail: mail@advaitaashrama.org

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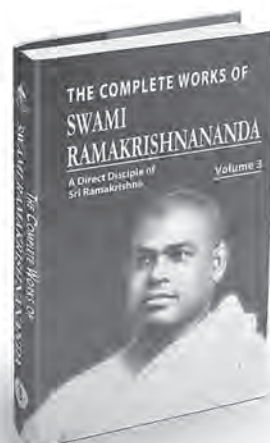
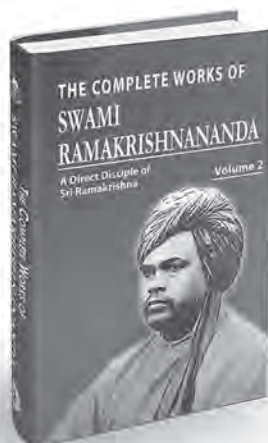
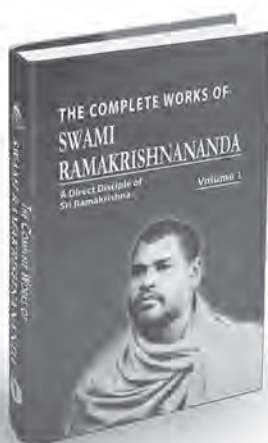
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उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत । *Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!*



Right Perception

September 2012
Vol. 117, No. 9

न नरेणावरेण प्रोक्त एष सुविज्ञेयो बहुधा चिन्त्यमानः ।
अनन्यप्रोक्ते गतिरत्र नास्ति अणीयान् ह्यतर्क्यमणुप्रमाणात् ॥

The Self is not certainly adequately known when spoken of by an inferior person; for it is thought of variously. When taught by one who has become identified with it, there is no further cogitation with regard to it, for it is beyond argumentation, being subtler even than the atomic quantity.

(*Katha Upanishad*, 1.2.8)

श्रोत्रस्य श्रोत्रं मनसो मनो यद् वाचो ह वाचं स उ प्राणस्य प्राणः ।
चक्षुषश्चक्षुरतिमुच्य धीराः प्रेत्यास्माल्लोकादमृता भवन्ति ॥

Since he is the Ear of the ear, the Mind of the mind, the Speech of the speech, the Life of the life, and the Eye of the eye, therefore intelligent people, after giving up (their self-identification with the senses) and renouncing this world, become immortal.

(*Kena Upanishad*, 1.2)

इयं पृथिवी सर्वेषां भूतानां मधु अस्यै पृथिव्यै सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु यश्चायमस्यां
पृथिव्यां तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः पुरुषः यश्चायमध्यात्मं शारीरस्तेजोमयोऽमृतमयः
पुरुषः अयमेव स योऽयमात्मा इदममृतम् इदं ब्रह्म इदं सर्वम् ॥

This earth is (like) honey to all beings, and all beings are (like) honey to this earth. The shining immortal being who is in this earth, and the shining, immortal, corporeal being in the body, (these four) are but this Self. This (Self-knowledge) is (the means of) immortality; this (underlying unity) is Brahman; this (knowledge of Brahman) is (the means of becoming) all.

(*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 2.5.1)

THIS MONTH

Humankind, though seemingly unmanageable, is indeed seeking **The Essence of Life** through all its endeavours.



Sri Ramakrishna's unique disciple Swami Adbhutananda was not erudite but a sage. His conversations compiled by Swami Siddhananda in *Sat Katha*, published by Udbodhan Office, are translated into English by Swami Sarvadevananda, Assistant

Minister, Vedanta Society of Southern California. We publish excerpts of these **Eternal Words**.

Dr Ravindra K S Choudhary of the Department of Philosophy, Vinoba Bhave University, Harzaribag, reveals in **Swami Vivekananda: Revolutionizing Philosophy** Swamiji's less known, though important, teachings that contributed to the world of philosophy.

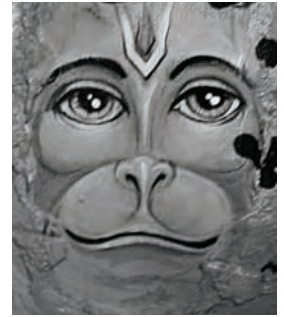


Dr V Vasanthakumari, Associate Professor, Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Payannur, Kerala, writes on the importance of **Acharya Shankara's Role in Spreading Human Values**.

Alaya-vijnana: Storehouse Consciousness is a significant doctrine in the Vijnanavada school of Mahayana Buddhism. Dr Amartya Kumar Bhattacharya of the Department of Applied Mechanics, Bengal Engineering and

Science University, Shibpur, shows how this difficult doctrine deals in fact with the human personality.

Surabhi Rathi, a research scholar at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai, captures in **What is Beautiful in the 'Sundara-kanda'** Hanuman's superb character and supreme bhakti to Rama, his Chosen Ideal.



Swami Vivekananda was an accomplished musician and a musicologist. Swami Sandarshananda, from the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar, presents an **Overview of Vivekananda's Talent for Music**.

In the concluding section of **Educational Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda**, Mohit Puri and Dr Pardeep Kumar reinforce Swamiji's concepts on education for all strata of society.



In the sixth instalment of **Svarajya Siddhih: Attaining Self-dominion** by the eighteenth century Gangadharendra Saraswati, fifteenth pontiff of Kanchi Kamakoti Pitham, Kanchipuram, the process of action and creative energy is explained.

EDITORIAL

The Essence of Life

‘**W**HAT IS THE ESSENCE of life? That alone is to be reflected upon repeatedly,’ says Acharya Shankara in his *Prashnottara Ratna-malika*. Humankind has, through all its efforts, trials, errors, wars, religions, knowledge, and scientific developments, been reflecting on the essence of life, either consciously or unconsciously. All these endeavours have not been always successful, but at least have broken the mental and physical bubble called isolation we thought we were in. Humans are now aware that life has vaster dimensions, greater significance, important implications, and interconnections and co-dependence with all life in the universe. The Buddhist doctrine of *pratityasamutpada*, co-dependent origination says that ‘all psychological and physical phenomena constituting individual existence are interdependent and mutually condition each other. This doctrine also describes what entangles sentient beings in samsara.’ Samsara veils us from discovering the essence of life. Swami Vivekananda, who revolutionized the study of philosophy, says: ‘There is the musk deer with fragrance inside, and he does not know where the fragrance [comes from].’ Similarly, we run about in search of our essence.

Many people all over the world claim that the opportunity to understand and discover our essence does not present itself. But they are wrong, for opportunity after opportunity comes to each and every person at every moment of life. It is as if the inner reality has been constantly knocking at the closed door of our minds to be discovered. The *Katha Upanishad* states: ‘*Shreyas*,

the superior, and the *preyas*, the pleasurable, approach man. The man of intelligence having considered them separates the two. The intelligent one selects the *shreyas* in preference to the *preyas*; the non-intelligent one selects the *preyas* for the sake of growth and protection (of the body and so forth).’ Acharya Shankara, in his commentary on this mantra, says that both opportunities ‘approach this man, as though they are intermixed’. Our discernment is flawed due to our desires, and we mistake the one for the other, with terrible consequences. Swamiji says: ‘In some oil mills in India, bullocks are used that go round and round to grind the oil-seed. There is a yoke on the bullock’s neck. They have a piece of wood protruding from the yoke, and on that is fastened a wisp of straw. The bullock is blindfolded in such a way that it can only look forward, and so it stretches its neck to get at the straw; ... It never catches the straw, but goes round and round in the hope of getting it, and in so doing, grinds out the oil. In the same way you and I who are born slaves to nature, money and wealth, wives and children, are always chasing a wisp of straw, a mere chimera, and are going through an innumerable round of lives without obtaining what we seek.’


The sight of disease, old age, and death upset the young Siddhartha, but to his enlightened mind, as the Buddha, the very existence of beings appeared to be full of suffering and misery. Indian religions and philosophies are generally interpreted as pessimistic, but Buddha’s pure insight cannot be wrong, neither did he nor the philosophers of India stop at pessimism, they showed

how life could be conquered and made beautiful.

People live in accordance with their philosophy of life and their conception of the world. But this philosophy of one's life needs correction from someone who sees the Truth. We have been making the mistake of taking suffering for the good and beautiful, thus frittering away every opportunity to improve life by eradicating suffering. Swamiji says: 'Practical men tell us, "Don't bother your heads about such nonsense as religion and metaphysics. Live here; this is a very bad world indeed, but make the best of it." Which put in plain language means, live a hypocritical, lying life, a life of continuous fraud, covering all sores in the best way you can. Go on putting patch after patch, until everything is lost, and you are a mass of patchwork. This is what is called practical life. Those that are satisfied with this patchwork will never come to religion. Religion begins with a tremendous dissatisfaction with the present state of things, with our lives, and a hatred, an intense hatred, for this patching up of life, an unbounded disgust for fraud and lies.' It is fraud and lies in the name of 'practicality' that is the source of suffering and misery.

Looking at the doctrine of *pratityasamutpada* from a different angle we find that the earth is truly beautiful, because it has been made inhabitable for life by life itself. Each life is linked with all other lives in a long uninterrupted chain, stretching from the distant past. For millions of years microscopic life forms have contributed the essential ingredients in the earth's atmosphere to help evolve and sustain other forms of life. The various life forms have also taken the available materials and chemicals found in nature to craft itself and the planet. The real essence of such a beautiful universal life is, however, still deeper. The *Taittiriya Upanishad* teaches: '*Raso vai sah*; He [Brahman] is verily the source of joy'. The *Upanishad* further explains that 'one becomes happy by

coming in contact with that source of joy. Who indeed will inhale and who will exhale if this Bliss be not there in the supreme space (within the heart). This One indeed enlivens people.'

An inkling of this joy is present in every life form, but it is more pronounced in human-kind. If this slight experience of joy is absent, all life would come to a standstill and perish. Our nature is joy and happiness, not suffering and misery. Our wrong choices make us see life as a frightful prospect and the world as dreadful. When our minds become cleared from the delusion of the ego and its various forms we then do not experience lies, inauspiciousness, and ugliness, but only *satyam-shivam-sundaram*, truth-goodness-beauty—the three in reality are one. One who experiences *rasa* within, experiences *rasa* in everything. Such a person becomes absolutely beautiful, good, and auspicious, and the whole world is attracted to such a one. All of that person's actions and words and every movement become beautiful. One who comes across such a person discovers one's own essence, because the ego is completely eradicated and in its place remains only the essence of life, God. In the *Ramayana* Hanuman, through his valour and devoted service, obtained the *Rama-rasayana*, the essence of Rama. 'Once a man asked Hanuman which day of the fortnight it was, "Brother," said Hanuman, "I don't know anything of the day of the week, or the fortnight, or the position of the stars. I think of Rama alone."' Sri Ramakrishna, whose spiritual experiences went way beyond the Vedas and Vedanta, says: 'I see that everything is Rama Himself.' If we remember God's nature as joyful, our meditation, prayers, worship, service, and singing will be full of joy. Sri Ramakrishna teaches that this *bhajananda*, joy of worship, pulls us away from the *vishayananda*, worldly joy, which is a form of suffering, and leads us to *brahmananda*, the joy of Brahman. 

Eternal Words

Swami Adbhutananda

Compiled by Swami Siddhananda, translated by Swami Sarvadevananda

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE for a worldly person to comprehend Sri Ramakrishna, the embodiment of infinite moods. As one imagines the glory of the Creator by seeing his creation, as waves offer a glimpse of the immeasurable power of the sea, as fruits attest to the quality of the tree and jewels to the quality of the mine, so we too can understand in the depth of our hearts some of the glory of the vast ocean of spirituality by associating with and speaking of those who were moulded by the Master's holy touch. Not all children will look upon their father in the same manner. To some, he is a teacher; to others, he is a disciplinarian, an adviser, a helper, or a co-worker. Yet to each child, he is surely an affectionate father. In the division of his wealth each of them has an equal right. After deeming them fit recipients, the Master manifested himself to his spiritual children and intimate devotees as the fullest expression of each one's own unique spiritual ideal.

Revered Latu Maharaj, Swami Adbhutananda, was one of the Master's intimate devotees. The Master used to say: 'I am the biggest fool.' But his devotee Latu was utterly illiterate. For this reason, amidst the spiritual truths flowing from him, one finds no crashing waves of scriptural erudition, nor feats of intellectual debate, but only the expression of his heart—the effulgent truth of living religion recounted in the simple words of a holy man.

All that is known of Swami Adbhutananda's early life is that he was born in a poor family in the Chapra district of Bihar. His name was

Rakhturam, and his nickname Latu. Though he came to Calcutta only to make money, he reached the supreme goal by obtaining the company of the Master. It was difficult to learn about his early days. It disgusted him to talk about himself. He would protest saying: 'Don't talk about me. That is useless. Talk day and night about the Master and Swamiji [Swami Vivekananda]. That will give you peace. By that, you will surely be blessed.'

From some unknown plane this bright star came in contact with the Earth and then disappeared in a blinding flash. For a moment it brought its rays of light to our deluded eyes. Whither it disappeared, we cannot know. But, in the fraction of that brilliant light reflected in his words of truth, we can glimpse his holy character and constitution. Though he never spoke of his family history or childhood memories, his words give us a clear impression of how in his adolescence, after coming in contact with the Master, his blessed life was guided and formed. Can a flower hide its fragrance? Its fragrance reveals its nature. In the same manner, the reader of his words will understand in their heart of hearts Swami Adbhutananda's exemplary character, intense renunciation, one-pointed dedication to Truth, otherworldly devotion to his guru, unswerving faith, incomprehensible love for God, unwavering dispassion, death-conquering inner struggle, complete conquest of self, single-minded focus on the goal, severe spiritual practices, rare spiritual attainments, and extraordinary self-sacrifice to promote the welfare of all.

On Sri Ramakrishna and His Disciples

Make the Master and Swamiji your ideals and go forward. The Holy Mother is Sri Thakur's Mahashakti, supreme Power. All devas are contained within them. The Holy Mother herself saw and said this. Can there be any more doubt about it? Where else will you find such an ideal? That same Shakti is playing in so many ways within their close associates as well. Everything is the lila of the Ishta, Chosen Ideal, for they are the world-teachers. Who can understand this? Those who can comprehend this lose themselves in it.

I always looked upon the Holy Mother as my own mother. The Holy Mother is truly our own Mother—what doubt can there be about it? Our Thakur was our very own father, our all in all. I had no more fear or worry. I was staying with them, just as a small child remains in the care of his father and mother. I would do my *sadhan-bhajan*, spiritual practices and worship, and at mealtimes I would eat. If in doing my sadhana I was delayed in coming for a meal, the Master would employ various tricks to bring me back and feed me. When I meditated too long he would do that, he would resort to some hoax to bring me back.

Thakur asked Yogin [Swami Yogananda] to keep the fruit prasad of Mother Kali in his room every day. Yogin thought: 'After all is said and done, he is still a brahmana priest. Where would his samskaras go? He hasn't been able to give up his attachment for such things as fruit prasad.' The moment this thought arose in Yogin's mind, the Master told him: 'The brahmanas take the prasad for their *avidyas*, wives; it is more beneficial that you boys eat them.' Then Yogin felt remorseful, thinking: 'What have I done? I thoughtlessly doubted him; it was only for us that he asked us to bring the prasad.'

The Master used to ask Rakhal Maharaj [Swami Brahmananda] and me to beg for alms. He often said: 'The food obtained by begging is very pure.' One day Rakhal Maharaj and I went to beg our food. As we were leaving the Master told us: 'Some may verbally abuse you. Some will bless you. Some will give you money. You should accept everything.' At the outset, someone who saw us begging chased us and exclaimed: 'Such strong and stout boys—and you are still begging alms? Can you not work for your food?' Rakhal Maharaj was frightened. I said: 'The Master has already told us all about this. Why are you afraid?' After that, one lady asked us: 'My child, what misery compels you to beg? What do you lack?' After we told her everything, she became happy, gave us a rupee coin, and, while looking at Surya Narayana [sun god], blessed us profusely saying: 'That for which you are wandering about—let God completely satisfy that hope of yours, fulfil that hope, grant that desire.' Many others also gave rice, coins, and other things. We brought all these things to the Master; he asked us: 'How did your begging go?' We told him everything. Hearing the words of that lady the Master declared: 'She has spoken correctly. You see, there is a connection between Surya Narayana and myself. One day I was suffering from a severe headache. Suddenly a man appeared and said: "That is not a disease of your head. You have a connection with Surya Narayana." Saying so, he left. Then I said to Hriday: "Oh, go see, where did that man go?" Hriday went as far as the gate before returning and saying: "I couldn't find him." Then the Master said: "All these are divine incidents.'

The Master asked Swamiji and Bhavanath to cook. It was Sunday. The Master stood watching them, very happy. Just when they finished cooking and everyone was going to sit and eat, a Baul [travelling ascetic musician] appeared. The Master told him: 'Not now. If there is

anything left, you can eat afterwards.’ The Baul became angry and left. Swamiji was thinking: ‘So many dishes have been cooked; why didn’t he invite him to eat? What a miser!’ The Master said: ‘He is a Baul. How many things he has done. What good karma has he performed that he should eat sitting with you all? You are all pure. How will you eat with him?’ Then Swamiji could understand why the Master had forbidden him, and then we understood what is meant by the effect of association. At the time of one’s sadhana it is not good to mix, eat, or do other things with just anyone and everyone. It destroys one’s spiritual mood. The Master used to observe strict rules about all these things and would warn us about them.

Swamiji has said that the Master is an avatara. What more shall I say? He is my guru, my father. Swamiji alone understood who he was. What do I know of him or understand of him that I shall speak of him? He brought Swamiji to propagate his message, and he also gave him the power to do so. Because of that, Swamiji could speak about him. I tell you this, certain as can be: to those who will call upon him with their heart and soul, he will surely show his grace.

Shashi Maharaj [Swami Ramakrishnananda] used to conduct the arati in such a way that the shrine room would be filled with splendour. Everyone had to go to the shrine at arati time. During the arati the ‘Guru Stotram’ was chanted. The best quality fruits were purchased for offering, despite the lack of income. People used to say: ‘They must have uncovered a few pots full of *mohurs*, gold coins. Otherwise, how can they make such exuberant offerings?’ Shashi Maharaj’s only thought was what could he offer to the Master. Day and night he was performing puja; still, he was also doing all other work himself. He used to tell us: ‘Don’t worry about your food.’

Swamiji used to meditate all night. Kali Maharaj [Swami Abhedananda] would sometimes meditate, sometimes study. He would verify in the scriptures what he had heard from the Master. How many nights we passed in meditation, japa, devotional singing, and music!

The Master would allow his disciples only a light meal at night. How could they practise meditation and japa if they ate heavily at that time? One who overeats is bound to fall asleep. He used to say: ‘During the day eat like forcing gunpowder into a rifle barrel [you can stuff yourself], and at night very little.’ The Master asked Yogananda: ‘What do you eat at night?’ He replied: ‘One pound of whole-wheat roti and half a pound of potato *chacchhari*, dry vegetable curry. Hearing this the Master said: ‘You need not serve me anymore. You get out. I will not be able to supply you with so much.’ Yogananda would serve the Master by day and return to his home at night.

Just as it is difficult to find a true guru, so too is it difficult to find a true disciple. A guru like the Master is most rare. He used to say: ‘Be as great as you want to be. At most, you can be like an incarnation. How much greater than this can you be?’ He had great compassion. He emphatically told us: ‘Do not marry. You will be able to understand dharma, one day or another, if you do not get married.’ He was affectionate to those who had spiritual potential; and as soon as he saw a poor man, he would feed him.

At Baranagar Math we were chit-chatting freely when Suresh Mitra came in. Immediately Swamiji hurried to the roof. Suresh Mitra said: ‘Why do you shrink so much from me? The Master is kindly permitting me to supply your provisions. That is why I am giving them to you. Why do you think otherwise?’ See how egoless Suresh Mitra was and how much love he bore for his brother disciples! This is rarely seen. Swamiji

used to say: 'This Math and all that you see here, it is all due to Suresh Mitra alone.'

Brother Bhupati's life was pure. He was a *tyagi*, renouncer, was well-educated, and had great competence in mathematics. He used to live in Kashi with Yogin and do sadhana. One day, seeing the good-quality brinjals of Kashi, Bhupati was going to beg money to buy them—as he had not a pice with him. Yogin was standing behind him and scolded Bhupati, saying: 'Hey! Will you not become a sadhu?' They performed severe austerities in Kashi.

The Master renounced lust and greed. Yet, how he scolded us if we wasted a single matchstick! How will you understand that? When it was time for his smoke, if someone lit a match, he would rebuke him, saying: 'Cooking is going on; bring fire from there. Why are you so lazy? With such laziness, can one gain dharma? A lazy person will never attain spirituality.' Swamiji used to say: 'One who is lazy in action, who excels in eating, who kills others by scorching them with harsh words, who only talks big but is nowhere to be found when there is work to do—such a one has come to attain spirituality! Hey! Is the attainment of spirituality so easy?'

If one could attain spirituality merely by being rich, many rich people in Calcutta would have achieved spirituality already. Our Master was very poor. One day he was extremely hungry. He told Ramlal-dada's mother: 'Oh, Ramlal's mother! See what you have in your house. I am very hungry.' Ramlal-dada's mother replied: 'Brother-in-law, there is nothing here except *panta-bhat*, rice soaked in water, and onion.' The Master ate that with great pleasure. You have no capacity to do anything—only hollow words. He whom people are worshipping as God ate that *panta-bhat* and onion!

Girish Ghosh said: 'The Master showered his grace on me in my old age. Had he shown

his grace to me when I was young, I would have shown the world what sannyasa really is.'

[From a letter written to Sharat Maharaj, Swami Saradananda.] I am getting to hear some spiritual talk read out from the *Udbodhan*. By God's grace may your body remain in good health—this is my earnest prayer. As the days are passing, by his grace I am coming to realize the glory of the Master and the rest of you. You are serving the Holy Mother. This is indeed a matter of great fortune. It is true that he is making you do this. Sri Krishna said: 'By whom I get my work done.' This is his compassion. Your body is blessed. At Dakshineswar the Master told me about you and Shashi Maharaj: 'Shashi and Sharat have their father, mother, and brothers. They lack nothing; yet they are restless for God-realization.' The Master also told me many more things about you two. I will tell you about all that when we meet. You are my brother in this life, you are my brother in the life to come: do not forget it.

I was very happy to hear that you went to the Math to attend the Master's birthday celebration. This celebration was started when the Master was still living, by Ram Datta and Suresh Mitra. The devotees had all gone to Dakshineswar on Sunday. The Master started talking about the avatars, the *tithi*, auspicious time, and details of their births. The devotees were all asking him: 'What was the *tithi* of your birth?' The Master scolded them, saying: 'What is the use of hearing that?' Then he said: 'The second day of the bright lunar fortnight of the month of Phalgun [the middle of February and March]'. He also told them: 'The person whose birthday it is should be offered new good-quality clothing and should be fed tasty eatables. A captive snakehead fish should be released into a pond. One should not eat fish or meat on that day.' Ram Datta and Suresh Mitra then exclaimed: 'We will also start celebrating.' In those days one hundred fifty to

two hundred people would assemble. Wonderful music would be performed—kirtan, devotional songs, instrumental pieces, and *padavali*, series of songs describing Sri Krishna's lila. Swamiji sang songs suitable for a small gathering. Any leftover food was distributed to the poor. It is natural that there should be joy during his birthday celebration. I am revealing this to you today. Don't forget it. ... The tamasic nature automatically leaves one who becomes engaged in repeating his name, meditating on him, and singing his glories.

One approaches the Paramatman by means of *vidya*, knowledge. Kali, Durga, Sita, and other such goddesses are embodiments of *vidya*. They help one reach Shiva. There is no envy, hatred, or anger in them. Their eternal wish is to help all go forward. The Master used to say that Radha had a little jealousy, she wanted Krishna all to herself, but that Sita did not have that attitude. She would send everyone to Rama.

Hrishikesh is a place for intense tapasya. The sadhus there practise meditation and japa ceaselessly. Lest any time be wasted in begging for



Swami Adbhutananda
(? – 1920)

food, arrangements have been made to supply them with cooked meals. This is indeed very good. The perfection that the Master attained at Dakshineswar was exceptionally rare. The sadhus say that this side [Bengal] is not a suitable place for tapasya.

The Master used to say that Tota Puri meditated all night. In the daytime he would lie under a wrapper. People thought he was asleep, but he was in fact meditating.

The guru and the Ishta are one. I babble on and on because you have doubts. If my body had not become ill, there would have been no need of anyone. What can I do? All this trouble comes when one takes a body. Had Vivekananda lived, would we have to worry about anything?

Dr Durgacharan would arrive at ten o'clock at night [at Dakshineswar] and call out: 'O Hriday! Hriday!' The Master would then tell Hriday: 'Open the door.' Hriday would open the door. The doctor would examine the Master from head to toe and depart without saying a single word. Moreover, he used to tell Hriday: 'Go there!' Meaning, he would [later] give him something. The doctor alone knew how he looked on the Master.

The Master used to say: 'I am king of the sannyasins.'

I scold you so much because you are my very own. If you don't understand, you will suffer. I am seeing directly that he *is*. Am I telling a lie? He is holding us. You must follow the Master's teachings. Otherwise, what will you understand?

Did we realize that the Master was God himself? If we had, could we have served him or stayed near him? We used to think of him as our father. We had no worry at all, we were free from anxiety. ... I used to go to Calcutta now and then. Going there, my mind would become drained and emptied out; again I would return

to the Master at Dakshineswar.

The people of Bengal and Orissa all accepted Mahaprabhu Gauranga Deva [Sri Chaitanya] as an avatara. See how great they are! And those who had no such faith, see their wretched condition! What is it to me if one respects the Paramahansa-deva or not? One who has faith will surely develop right understanding.

Liberation rests in the Master's hand. I have this earnest desire: that in every birth I may get a brother disciple like Vivekananda. I didn't understand this before. He did so much for me, yet at times I insulted him. But he didn't mind anything. Remembering all that now, what misery I feel. To whom shall I express this? Surely I worship him. Just second to the Master's love is the love of Vivekananda. See, I had a strong body. I was very joyful. I didn't care for anybody. During the daytime I would lie down on the bank of the Ganges, and at night at the Basumati Press. Then my Vivekananda-bhai [brother] went away, and immediately my health broke down. There was no other cause. For so long I didn't disclose this. Today I am telling you all. That is why it seems this body will not recover.

Nowadays the Master's name has spread all around. What a joy it would have been had Vivekananda-bhai been alive. I had asked him: 'What is the use of starting this Math and all?' Brother Vivekananda replied: 'The Math is not for you or for me. All these things are for the youngsters. If they can lead their lives in a pure manner, that itself will bring great good. By his grace there will be no lack of simple food and clothing at the Math.' Now I can see that whatever he said is true. After returning from America he asked me: 'Where did you eat? You were living like a drifter.' I said: 'Upen Mukherjee of Basumati Press fed me.' Swamiji blessed Upen Babu profusely.

Once there was a rule at the Math that everyone would have to get up at four o'clock in the morning to meditate. All would be awakened by a ringing bell. One day I woke up in the morning and, taking my cloth and towel on my shoulder, started to leave. Seeing me Swamiji asked: 'Where are you going?' I said: 'You have come from England. How many new rules will you inflict on us? I will not be able to obey them. Is my mind a clock that as soon as a bell is rung it will become absorbed? This has not happened with me. If you have attained such a state, that is good. By the Master's grace there will be some arrangement for a little food for me in Calcutta.' Understanding my state of mind Swamiji said: 'You need not go away. These rules are not for you. These boys are all new; these rules are for getting them permanently established in one mood.' Then I said: 'Oh! That is why you are saying so.'

If, just after coming out of meditation and japa, someone beats and curses others, what kind of thing is that? Swamiji told one of the Master's children: 'It would be better for you not to meditate.' Swamiji had a lot of anger, but for his brother disciples, his love was profound. If he came to hear an outsider criticizing any of us, there would be no escape for him. There was no scope for any outsider to say anything.

Swamiji asked Shashi Maharaj: 'Shashi, do you love me a lot?' Shashi Maharaj said: 'Yes, I love you very much.' Swamiji said: 'Will you do what I say? Then go. Bring some baked bread from the corner of the Chitpore military barracks, and bring it around five o'clock when the offices are just closing and many people are walking in the streets.' Though he was the son of an orthodox brahmana, at five o'clock in the afternoon Shashi Maharaj brought that bread.¹ At Alambazar Math, when Shashi Maharaj's mind was absorbed in the Master's puja, Swamiji suddenly told him: 'You must go to Madras.' He

went immediately. He did not say anything or raise objections of any sort. Being a monk Shashi didn't even make a stop in Kashi. Such was the depth of his love for his brother disciple.

If anyone became very angry, the Master would tell us: 'Don't touch him. He has touched an untouchable.' As one becomes untouchable by touching an untouchable, so does a person become when overcome by anger.

When I would feel dissatisfied and want to go to various places, Thakur would understand my mental state at a glance and say: 'Hey! Where would you go leaving behind the prasad of Dakshineswar? Don't make your mind restless. Don't you know how much difficulty you will have getting food if you go out?' But from time to time Thakur would say: 'Go, visit Calcutta.' I would go to Calcutta for a few days and return [to Dakshineswar]. I didn't like Calcutta either. Where should I get so much freedom as I had while staying with the Master? This is called the grace of the guru. There never arose such a doubt in my mind as, 'Why should I obey his commands?' This too is indeed the grace of the guru.

Swami Bhaskarananda [of Kashi] said: 'Don't roam about anywhere. You will not get anything by wandering.' I went with Yogin and others to see him in his garden. Seeing our young age Bhaskarananda was very pleased, blessed us, and attended on us nicely. He said: 'God will be gracious to you, without any doubt. Sit in one place and call upon him. Listen to my story of suffering: I went on foot to the four holy places [Kedar-Badri, Jagannath, Dwarkanath, and Rameshwaram]. There were no railroads in those days. You can easily understand the great ordeal. Even after so much wandering I didn't get anything. The same old suffering remained. Then, coming to this garden, I made a resolution: either I would realize God or the body would drop. Be that as it may, I have now attained some

bliss.' Taking a staff in his hand, he started telling us stories while walking with us. At that time the worship of his image was going on. He was very happy. He asked us: 'What is going on there?' I said: 'You are Narayana. They are worshipping you.' Then he said with a smile, in the mood of an innocent child: 'What do you say!'

The Master's food was ready. Suddenly he went out, ate at someone's house in Dakshineswar, and returned, chewing paan. Not finding him Hriday started calling loudly for him. The Master returned, saying: 'I have come after eating at their house.' Hriday felt sorry and said: 'What bad luck I have! Uncle, where did you go to eat? There were so many rich varieties of delicious prasada ready for you here.' The Master replied: 'When the state of a *paramahansa* is attained, such things happen. Where one will eat cannot be fixed with any certainty.'

The Master used to greatly love the food obtained by *madhukari*, begging from different houses. He used to call it pure and helpful for sadhana and devotion.

When the Master visited Kashi and Vrindavan with Mathur, the latter spent huge sums of money feeding the poor. Seeing Mathur spending so much the Master said: 'What if your mother-in-law [Rani Rasmani] objects?' Mathur Babu replied: 'She has no right to say anything. I have multiplied her assets.'

Mathur asked the Master: 'Father, what karma have I done that I would not be reborn? For this reason I want to do as much good work as I can.' The Master said: 'This rascal is very clever and shrewd.'

Mathur Babu's family guru once told him: 'I can see that your Chosen Ideal will stay with you always, eat with you, and do everything with you.' Later, when he obtained the company of the Master, everything tallied with the guru's words. How great were the family gurus of the

past! I say this to emphasize that one who does spiritual practices attains perfection, whether one be a householder or a monk. But the scorching pain of this world and its maya make householders forget everything—that is the defect.

The Master used to say: 'What sin did you commit by marrying? Why should you fear? I am here; if you have my grace, there is nothing to fear. But it is bad to marry and become captivated.'

The Master had neither money nor a garden. What kind of greed prompted the rich to fall at his feet? ... Words cannot express how happy the Master would be at the chanting of Hari's name. One day a few people became absorbed in chanting Hari's name. Afterwards they discovered that he was fanning them. They all exclaimed: 'Sir, what are you doing? What are you doing?' He replied: 'Ah! You all chanted the name of Hari with so much effort! Can I not fan you a little?'

Those who deliberately chose not to see the Master during his lifetime are now repenting. A certain engineer, a gentleman of Dakshineswar, came to see Swamiji with Yogin Maharaj's father. In the course of conversation Swamiji said: 'Why didn't you visit the Master?' The gentleman replied: 'He and I went up to the Master's door. He [Yogin Maharaj's father] said: "Wait. He's crazy. Don't go to him. Let's go to the sadhu in the Panchavati." We ended up going to the sadhu in the Panchavati. If one does not, by good fortune, get the grace of a sadhu, one cannot get his darshan. Now I deeply regret that, because of a few thoughtless words, I could not receive his darshan.'

(To be continued)

Reference

1. An orthodox brahmana would not consider it proper to walk through the streets at such an hour carrying bread that had not been prepared by brahmanas.

Swami Vivekananda: Revolutionizing Philosophy

Dr Ravindra K S Choudhary

PHILOSOPHY IS A BOLD intellectual enterprise. It is the love of studying and understanding the fundamental nature of knowledge, truth, and existence. Other branches of knowledge commence by accepting certain postulates, but philosophy begins by taking nothing for granted. Philosophy is a radically critical discipline that constantly questions its own premises to clarify its insights and articulate its methods of arriving at conclusions. Philosophy frequently changes its course by criticizing its inadequacies and inconsistencies in its earlier formulations, sometimes leading the whole venture in quite a new direction. Whenever a revolution in philosophy takes place, it inevitably involves a radical shift in the very idea of philosophy itself.¹

The study of the six orthodox systems and the unorthodox systems of Indian philosophy was reserved for only a handful of elite intellectuals. Since the advent of Swami Vivekananda there has been a widespread interest in Indian philosophical systems, especially in Vedanta. This renewed interest is largely due to Swamiji's perceptions and interpretation of the nature, function, and purpose of philosophy.

Swamiji as a Philosopher

Swamiji is regarded by many as a pioneer of the Indian renaissance, a social reformer, a champion of the underprivileged, a spiritual socialist, a re-interpreter of Sanatana Dharma, a saint, a prophet, and so on. In all these descriptions one tends to overlook Swamiji's distinctiveness of

basically being a philosopher by training, temperament, trait, and teaching.

While transmitting profound ideas to common people Swamiji did not do so in the manner of a traditional academic professor but rather as an inspired philosopher. He made difficult philosophical ideas available to the masses in a simple yet authentic manner. To Swamiji, philosophy was a living force and this made his ideas fresh and applicable, not just to the higher orders of thought, but also to all walks of life. Underlying these theoretical and practical accomplishments there is a specific conception of philosophy that Swamiji has maintained throughout his works.

Being a student of philosophy, and immensely sensible, Swamiji was aware of the dismal state of affairs in the study of philosophy. From an early age one of the factors that drove him was 'to develop a sympathetic understanding broad enough to include all cultures and all religions'.² So, we find Swamiji 'desirous of encompassing all knowledge, Eastern and Western, in philosophy and history, in the arts and sciences, but especially in Western philosophy. ... He was aware that most philosophical systems are only intellectual diagrams, giving no place to emotions of man, thereby stifling his creative and responsive faculties. Moreover, it requires as great an act of faith to believe in a speculative system of thought as to "believe without understanding" in theological dogmas. Naren did not want diagrams of Truth, no matter how clever: he wanted the Truth' (ibid.).

Swamiji sensed that there was a need for a radical change in the prevailing conception of philosophy. But what kind of revolution will be of use in solving the actual problems of life? 'The scriptures consisting of many words are a dense forest which merely causes the mind to ramble. Hence men of wisdom should earnestly set about knowing the true nature of the Self.'³ On the other hand, popular perception associates revolutions mainly with radical changes in the social and political arenas. Swamiji considered this notion of revolution superficial and misleading. He observes: 'There is a class which clings on to the political and social changes, as the only panacea for the evils in Europe, but among the great thinkers of the world, other ideals are growing. They have found that no amount of political or social manipulation of human conditions can cure the evils of life. It is the change of the soul itself for the better that alone will cure the evils of life.'⁴ Thus, Swamiji's idea of a revolution is that changes should be slow, peaceful, and far-reaching, rather than violent sociopolitical upheavals. Humanity needs a thoroughgoing transformation, but so far there have been only occasional facelifts. Swamiji said: 'Thus these races of the world are eager for some new thoughts, for some philosophy' (ibid.). The question naturally arises here as to what sort of philosophy does humanity desperately need? In Swamiji's view, such a philosophy should be endowed with certain characteristic features.

Spiritual Values • Philosophy must have inbuilt spiritual values and inspirational qualities. Swamiji rightly observed: 'True philosophy should be the mother of spiritual action, the fountain-head of creative energy, the highest and noblest stimulus to will.'⁵ Humanity is in need of spiritual awakening to conquer materialism and its miseries. Spiritual awakening inevitably leads one to self-realization. Such a goal is not so much

a matter of intellectual pursuit as a culture of the heart, of the feeling for others. Swamiji was in fact opposed to mere intellectualism, which was prevalent in Western philosophic traditions. The reason for this opposition is that intellectual tradition 'takes no care of heart' and it also 'makes man ten times more selfish.'⁶ According to Swamiji, the 'intellect can never become inspired; only the heart when it is enlightened, becomes inspired. An intellectual, heartless man never becomes an inspired man' (1.413).

Where there is heart, there is power to bring about a peaceful revolution. Swamiji knew well that there cannot be any revolution unless there is a radical shift in the concept of philosophy itself. Only an appropriate philosophy can prepare the ground for revolution and guide it through the proper path. Swamiji was passionately concerned about the human predicament of the modern age, so he wanted to free philosophy from mere metaphysical speculations and theological dogmas. He wished to make it spiritually inspirational. Speaking on practical spirituality he said: 'Now, when we study metaphysics, we come to know the world is one, not that the spiritual, the material, the mental, and the world of energies are separate. It is all one, but seen from different planes of vision. When you think of yourself as a body, you forget that you are a mind, and when you think of yourself as a mind, you will forget the body. There is only one thing, that you are; you can see it either as matter or body—or you can see it as mind or spirit' (2.31).

Universal Appeal • The kind of philosophy we want must have a universal outlook. It should be capable of unifying people of varying places and races with its inherent vision of universal brotherhood. Such a vision, according to Swamiji, should be firmly rooted in the essential spiritual nature of humankind and the potential

divinity of each individual, thereby leading to the ultimate unity of all souls. This universality is not a matter of convenience for people at large and not a ploy of a few to gain the support of the masses. This is robustly founded upon the Vedantic principle of unity in diversity. By universality Swamiji meant perfect acceptance, not mere tolerance. He therefore wanted an all-inclusive 'Advaitic catholicity' to flourish all over the world. He said: 'I tell you brother, let everything go on as it is, only take care that no form becomes necessary—unity in variety—see that universality be not hampered in the least. Everything must be sacrificed, if necessary, for that one sentiment, *universality*. ... Remember this specially, that universality—perfect acceptance, not tolerance only—we preach and perform.'⁷

Philosophy Linked to Actuality • The world is in need of a philosophy that can strengthen a life of activity and service to humankind. We must perform our duties in accordance with the varying circumstances in which we are placed. Human life is meant for working unwaveringly with a stern sense of duty and without any sign of weakness. Our philosophy should not be an intellectual gymnastics, nor should it be an arty-crafty spirituality. It must be a philosophy of life that can motivate us to work and not to care for the results, to help a person and never think that he or she ought to be grateful. 'Love, truth, and unselfishness are not merely moral figures of speech, but they form our highest ideal, because in them lies such a manifestation of power' (1.32). In Swamiji's view, work and service



are actually essential for the growth of the soul, which leads to the goal of Self-realization. He was therefore of the opinion that 'it is an insult to a starving man to teach him metaphysics' (1.20). Emphasizing this aspect of her master's message, Sister Nivedita most eloquently said:

The idea, thought of as mere words, leads irretrievably to scholasticism and verbiage. Most serious of intellectual vices is a hair-splitting metaphysic. This may indicate the potentiality, but it can never be an actual manifestation of the power, of a mind. Left to run its own course, it proves the beginning of mental and moral disintegration. It has to be corrected and restrained, step by step, by the conscientious endeavour for the practical realization of ideas and ideals.⁸

This philosophical enterprise, for Swamiji, is not just an intellectual adventure, but a sadhana. Hence, he often viewed it as a part of jnana yoga, the path of knowledge, as conceived in the Vedantic tradition. And as such he goes on to integrate it with karma yoga, the path of action, and bhakti yoga, the path of devotion. Swamiji elucidates this synthesis beautifully:

Although a man has not studied a single system of philosophy, although he does not believe in any God, and never has believed, although he has not prayed even once in his whole life, if the simple power of good action has brought him to the state where he is ready to give up his life and all else for others, he has arrived at the same point to which the religious man will come through his prayers and the philosopher through his knowledge; and so you may find that the philosopher, the worker, and the devotee, all meet at one point, that one point being self-abnegation.⁹

Karma yoga, in Swamiji's view, is 'the attaining through unselfish work of that freedom which is the goal of all human nature' (1.110). This goal is within the reach of a true philosopher as well

as of a religious believer, but the way of the unselfish worker captures the very essence of morality. 'That which is selfish is immoral, and that which is unselfish is moral' (ibid.), said Swamiji. This also suggests that all our philosophical pursuits call for self-sacrifice; otherwise it would amount to being selfish and thereby immoral. A true philosopher is one who, like Swami Vivekananda, maintains a harmony among knowledge, devotion, and action.

Acharya Shankara said:

As a treasure hidden underground requires (for its extraction) competent instruction, excavation, the removal of stones and other such things lying above it and (finally) grasping, but never comes out by being (merely) called out by name, so the transparent Truth of the Self, which is hidden by maya and its effects, is to be attained through the instructions of a knower of Brahman, followed by reflection, meditation and so forth, but not through perverted arguments.¹⁰ ❧

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Acharya Shankara's Role in Spreading Human Values

Dr V Vasanthakumari

THE EARLIEST EXPOSITION of values regarding human duties and goals is found in the Rig Veda, the oldest extant scripture. Vedic ideals of oneness like '*Yatra viśvaṁ bhavaty-eka-nīdam*'; he in whom the universe finds a single place of rest,¹ or of togetherness and cooperation like '*Sam gacchadhvaṁ sam vadadhvaṁ sam vo manānsi jānatām*'; assemble, speak together, let your minds be of one accord,² are a deep and genuine approach to essential human values. The tremendous development of science in the last two centuries has paved the way for a rising tide of materialism all over the world. It is true that humankind has made wonderful and important scientific progress, but most of us have been dazzled by its effects: technology, which has kept us away from spiritual values. We have forgotten that the secret of life is the process of unveiling our inner essence.

Today it is clearly demonstrated everywhere that the harmony between human beings and nature has been broken due to insatiable human greed. The fine balance between human needs and natural resources has been disrupted, creating an unprecedented environmental crisis. This is affecting humankind like never before; an overall deterioration of the quality of life and the acceleration of social disparities, degradation, and imbalance is taking place. We have not been able to utilize human development to fulfil our spiritual hunger and needs, resulting in a one-sided development. Such progress has made us very competent in the external world

but thoroughly incompetent to deal with our inner world. It is apparent that physical science cannot help us solve these looming problems.

Prompted by love of truth and human welfare Acharya Shankara systematically developed the science of the human being in depth—known as Advaita Vedanta—which speaks of the infinite immortal Self behind the finite mortal self. Many speak of Advaita Vedanta as dry and intellectual, but this perception is wrong; it is the ultimate philosophy of love rooted in the essential non-difference of all existence. This philosophy is also universal and absolute because it is not based on any relative or partial truth, or meant for a few select people. Our growing feeling of imperfection, however much we may be endowed with qualities, is actually due to the absence of absolute spiritual values based on the Atman. This paper is an attempt to discuss the role of Acharya Shankara, the great Advaita philosopher of the eighth century CE, in spreading spiritual values that have the capacity to transform the very idea of being human.

The Goal of Life

A true philosopher is unprejudiced and receptive to new ideas, wherever they come from. Acharya Shankara's system of thought is found to be most congenial and acceptable to the modern mind. His logical, speculative, intellectual, and critical acumen is the highest ever exhibited by any philosopher. The sublime philosophy, logically initiated by Shankara, teaches us

the goal of humankind. Without being properly acquainted with Shankara's doctrines some argue that he negates the reality of the universe, but it should be understood that he accepts the relative reality of the world. In his *Brahma Sutra Bhashya*, he clearly states: '*Sarva vyavahārāṇāmeva prāg-brahmātmātā-vijñānāt satyatvopapattēḥ*; all common human dealings or Vedic observances are logical (and valid) prior to the realization of the identity of the Self and Brahman.'³ He reminds us that this life is transitory and should be used for doing good: '*Kim manuṣeṣu iṣṭatamam. Sva-para-hitāya udyataṁ janma*; what is the most desirable for human beings? Life dedicated for one's and others' welfare.'⁴ This goodness will lead us beyond this life to eternity.

Humanism is a system of thought that attaches great importance to humankind and declares its dignity, duties, and rights. It stresses the potential value of human beings, looks at common concerns, and seeks rational ways of solving human problems. According to Shankara, *manuṣyatvam*, humanness; *mumukṣutvam*, desire to attain moksha; and

mahāpuruṣa-samśrayaḥ, association with the virtuous, are three qualities difficult to attain.⁵ *Avidyā-kama-karma*, ignorance-desire-action, and impressions—all these combined makes an ordinary human being. He discusses different ways to avoid ignorance, control desire, and make actions perfect. Shankara states that there is nothing higher or stronger than righteousness, which is truth put into action.

Due to the fast pace of life in society, which puts a premium on time, many people are restless and disturbed. This restlessness is reflected in behaviour and manners that are brusque and impatient. This impatience leads to selfishness and the loss of human values. Such a lifestyle is far from what Shankara highlights. According to him, an ideal life stands above all criticism. A human being has the duty to show kindness to the suffering and cultivate friendship with the good.

Shankara has given importance to ahimsa, '*Ahimsā vān-manahkāyaiḥ prāṇimātrā-prapīḍanam, svātmavat-sarvabhūteṣu kāyena manasā girā*; ahimsa is not only abstaining from inflicting pain on other living beings, but is regarding all beings as oneself in thought, word,

River Periyar, Kalady, in which Acharya Shankara, as a young boy, took sannyasa



and deed.⁶ A merciful person is honoured even by celestial beings. Swami Vivekananda says: 'We often talk of right and justice, but we find that in the world right and justice are mere baby's talk. There are two things which guide the conduct of men: might and mercy. The exercise of might is invariably the exercise of selfishness. All men and women try to make the most of whatever power or advantage they have. Mercy is heaven itself; to be good, we have all to be merciful. Even justice and right should stand on mercy.'⁷ Shankara mentions four auspicious virtues that are rare to find in this world: '*Dānam priyavāk sahitam jñānam a-garvam kṣamānvitam śauryam vittam tyāga-sametam durlabham-etat chaturbhadram*; charity along with sweet words, knowledge with humility, courage with patience, and wealth with renunciation, these four auspicious things are hard to attain.'⁸ He also says that a person who merely accumulates wealth but never uses it for his or her enjoyment or for giving it to others deserves pity. The quality of generosity is praiseworthy in one blessed with abundance.

In all his works Shankara has stressed the importance of the *ṣaṭ sampattiḥ*, six treasures: curbing the mind from sense objects, restraining the sense organs from their objects, cessation of the organs so restrained, endurance, concentration, and faith. These six treasures are also the cardinal virtues of life. Unless one conquers the six passions—lust, wrath, greed, pride, delusion, and jealousy—one cannot attain peace. One who is greedy becomes incapable of discriminating between good and evil, and one who lacks discrimination is destroyed.

Another important value is that of straightforwardness. Shankara says: '*Anukāṃpā dayā saiva proktā vedānta-vedibhiḥ. Karaṇatritayaṣvekarūpatā'vakra-tā matā*'; compassion means kindness, so say the knowers of the Vedānta and the Vedas. It implies coordination of thought,

expression, and action as revealed in one's day-to-day conduct.'⁹

We know that people are not ashamed to beg for favours, especially for attaining power and position from any source and at any cost, forgetting even their identity. Here we should remember the words of Shankara, who says that a good character is found in 'one who is virtuous' and 'who does not ask favours [from anyone]'.¹⁰ The real 'decoration' of such a person is his or her 'character' (22). He also says: '*Kim laghutāyā mūlam. Prākṛta-puruṣeṣu yācñā*'; what is the cause of ignominy? Currying the favour of unregenerate people' (32).

One who follows the advice of wise people and exercises control over the senses can be saved from calamities. According to Shankara, cleanliness is of two kinds: external and internal. External cleanliness is attained by the use of earth and water. Internal cleanliness, or purity, is attained only by means of the removal of ignorance. Where there is inner purity, mere external cleanliness becomes less significant. It is by the practice of continence and other virtues that the intellect becomes purified.

Higher Values

Many people today practise yoga, but they are unable to attain its goal; they follow the asanas of hatha yoga to become physically fit, but cannot enjoy the freedom that emanates from practising raja yoga. Shankara states that only those who are endowed with patience may attain the goal of yoga. They alone enjoy freedom. Others who lack patience are overpowered by obstacles; they drift about like withered leaves before the wind: '*Kṣamāvatāmēva hi yoga-siddhiḥ svārājyalakṣmī-sukha-bhoga-siddhiḥ. Kṣamāvihīnā nīpatanti vighnairvatairhataḥ parṇacayā iva drumāt*'.¹¹

Only one who is endowed with patience knows how to honour those who are worthy



Evening prayer at Ramakrishna
Advaita Ashrama, Kalady

of reverence and how to endure the reproach of others. Even though Shankara advocates *saguṇopāsana*, worship of the personal God, he does not take it as a means of knowledge: '*Dhyāna-pūjā-dikam loke draṣṭaryeva karoti yaḥ. Pāramārthika-dhī-hīnaḥ sa dambhācāra ucyate*; one who meditates and worships only to show off to people, lacks higher knowledge [and] he is called by the wise ostentatious' (116). According to Shankara, knowledge is the most luminous quality that a person can possess. The Bhagavadgita says: '*Api ced-asi pāpebhyah sarvebhyah pāpa-kṛt-tamaḥ, sarvaṁ jñāna-plavenaiva vṛjinam santariṣyasi*; even if you be the worst sinner among all sinners, still you will cross over all the wickedness with the raft of Knowledge alone.'¹²

Though we are prone to err in most of our dealings, we should try to avoid making mistakes. Sins committed knowingly but guarded under the veil of secrecy cause torment till death: '*Āmaraṇāt kiṁ sālyam. Pracchannaṁ yat kṛtaṁ pāpam*; what pains like a shaft till death?

The sin committed in secrecy.'¹³ Most people, with nothing better to do, engage in gossip, typically involving details that are not confirmed or are untrue. Shankara advises against gossiping about others' faults and wasting time and harming oneself. An intelligent person never indulges in such behaviour. A person's real earnings consist of knowledge, wealth, strength, fame, and holiness. Greed destroys one's merits entirely. It is very difficult to achieve a good name in society; so after achieving a good name, one should protect it.

Shankara reminds us of the necessity of a student-oriented education. A teacher should always strive for the good of the disciple and also should be endowed with the power of discrimination. According to him, learning transmitted to a worthy disciple resembles the fabled tree *kalpavṛkṣa*, which grants the wishes of all who come under its shade; such learning is sure to be beneficial and lasts for generations of disciples.

Shankara shows a clear path to success in life. He says that concentrated efforts cause success.

We should honour holy people and also respect the advice of the wise and the elderly who know the essence of dharma. The merits of one's good actions are the source of all happiness. One endowed with true humility attains higher levels in life, whereas the proud and arrogant are subject to downfall. The person who speaks the truth, is beneficial to humankind, and is of righteous conduct is able to win the support of the society in which he or she is living. A person who has the approval and admiration of virtuous people is to be identified as one with meritorious actions. '*Kasya kriyā saphalā. Yab punaḥ ācāravān śiṣṭaḥ*'; whose action is fruitful? One who is of good conduct and refined' (50). Shankara does not advocate inaction or the forsaking of action.

It is essential to note that moulding the character of individuals is of the utmost importance. This process is called *saṁskāra*, purification. Shankara explains: '*Samśkāro hi nāma saṁskāryasya guṇādhanena vā syād doṣāpanayena vā*'; purification is achieved either through the addition of some quality or removal of some defect.¹⁴ Therefore, *saṁskāra* is a process to purify, develop, mould, educate, and prepare a person to do his or her duties at every stage of life. It helps in the acquisition of all other necessary qualities.

It is clear that in order to secure happiness for all, individually and collectively, economic planning or scientific development alone is not enough. It is also necessary to have a fundamental educational plan to produce a sufficient number of youths of good character, who are also learned, resolute, and morally and physically fit. In this modern age the awareness of the importance of these essential values to lead a proper life would produce a new generation of responsible citizens. Let each one of us remember the great Upanishadic mantra: '*Yuvā syāt-sādhu yuvā-dhyāyakaḥ, āśiṣṭho drdhiṣṭho baliṣṭhaḥ tasyeyam*

prthivī sarvā vittasya pūrṇā syāt sa eko mānuṣa ānandaḥ'; suppose there is a young man—in the prime of life, good, learned, most expeditious, most strongly built, and most energetic. Suppose there lies this earth for him filled with wealth. This will be one unit of human joy.¹⁵ In his commentary on this mantra, Shankara says that this unit of joy keeps on increasing 'in accordance with the attenuation of ignorance, desire, and action' (1.370). This is known as the secret of unveiling our inner essence, which leads us to infinite bliss.



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Alaya-vijnana: Storehouse Consciousness

Dr Amartya Kumar Bhattacharya

WHAT WE THINK, WE DO. Our mind determines our personality. This article deals with the definition of personality according to Buddhism. Buddha says: 'I say *bhikkus* that volition is action. Having thought, one acts through body, speech, and mind.'¹ The Yogachara or Vijnanavada school of Mahayana Buddhism deals with human personality in great detail. Yogachara, which had its genesis in the *Samdhinirmochana Sutra* (second century CE), was largely formulated by Acharyas Asanga and Vasubandhu. The *Samdhinirmochana Sutra* is the seminal text of the Yogachara school. The *Lankavatara Sutra* (fourth century CE) is another very important text of this school. The *Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra* is also

considered important. There are innumerable philosophical schools of Buddhism but the four principal ones are: Madhyamika, with its doctrine of *shunya*, nihilism; Vijnanavada, and its subjective idealism; Sautrantika, representationists; and, Vaibhasika, realists.

Buddha's Teachings of Anatmata

Buddha, consistent with his teachings of conditioned existence and the law of universal change, denies through his doctrine of *anatmata*, or *nairatmya*, the existence of a permanent Atman unaffected by changes and which transmigrates from body to body. The Sanskrit word 'Atman', the Pali word 'Atta', and the Chinese word 'Shen' mean Self. The Buddhist wisdom, gained by

experience, is that the Atman is not found even in the deepest meditative state, that is, even during samadhi. Further, subscription to a belief in the Atman results in *ahamkara*, egoism, and attachment to mundane things. In its most fundamental sense, *nairatmya* implies selflessness, which has its external manifestation in selfless action in order to benefit others.

In the course of yet another sermon, at Shravasti in the Jetavana, Buddha says: ‘There is an unborn, unchanging, uncreated, and unconditioned. If there were not that, which is unborn, unchanging, uncreated, and unconditioned, there could not be any escape from what is born, changing, created, and conditioned. But since there is an unborn, unchanging, uncreated, and unconditioned, there is an escape from what is born, changing, created, and conditioned.’² With these words Buddha indicates the *paramartha-satya*, ultimate Truth, which is nirvana. At another point Buddha mentions that *bhava-trishna*, desire for existence, is also one kind of desire that keeps us bound. The existence of a person depends on the collection of different constituents: material body, immaterial mind, and *vijnana*, formless consciousness, just as a chariot is a collection of wheels, axles, shaft and so forth. The so-called individual ‘existence’ dissolves when the constituents break up. In the *Dhammapada* it is said: ‘*Sarva dharma anatma*; all phenomena are not-self.’³ ‘The conception of a Self is thus replaced here by that of an unbroken stream of consciousness.’⁴ It must be kept in mind that Buddha’s attitude is practical, and his primary concern is the salvation of suffering human beings. His silence in response to speculative metaphysical questions such as whether the self is different from the body, whether it survives death, whether the world is finite or infinite, eternal or non-eternal, are called the great ‘indeterminate questions’.

According to Buddhism, nothing animate or inanimate is exempt from the law of change. This is obvious from an inspection of the first and third of the Four Noble Truths enunciated by Buddha in the *Dharmachakrapravartana Sutra*. The first noble truth says that life in the world is full of suffering; the third maintains that it is possible to stop suffering. All changes imply suffering. ‘All things, Buddha repeatedly teaches, are subject to change and decay’ (135). A person cannot step into the same river twice. When one thing disappears, it conditions the appearance of another thing, creating thus a series of cause and effect. Everything is in a state of ‘becoming’ something else the very next moment. A wheel cannot be separated from its movement. There is no static wheel ‘behind’ the wheel in motion. Things change over time. Everything originates in function of other factors, that is, all things come into existence as the result of an interaction of various causes. This law of *pratitya-samutpada*, dependent origination, is central to Buddhism. For example, anger cannot arise by itself, without a cause. Swami Vivekananda graphically describes the process of dependent origination:

This body is the name of one continuous stream of matter—every moment we are adding material to it, and every moment material is being thrown off by it—like a river continually flowing, vast masses of water always changing places; yet all the same, we take up the whole thing in imagination, and call it the same river. What do we call the river? Every moment the water is changing, the shore is changing, every moment the environment is changing, what is the river then? It is the name of this series of changes. So with the mind. That is the great Kshanika Vijnana Vada doctrine, most difficult to understand, but most rigorously and logically worked out in the Buddhist philosophy.⁵

Alaya-vijnana

From the psychological point of view a person is analysable into a collection of *pancha-skandas*, five aggregates: *rupa*, *vedana*, *samjna*, *samskara*, and *vijnana*, all of which are identified as *anatma*, non-Self, by Buddha in the *Anatmalakshana Sutra*. The first is *rupa*, form, and the last four are categorized as *nama*, name. *Vedana*, sensations, of the physical world of *rupa* are received by the sense organs—the five physical sense organs and the mind are called the six sensory bases; sensations lead to *samjna*, perceptions, including understanding and naming; this in turn leads to *samskara*, pre-dispositions or tendencies generated by impressions of past experiences; lastly *vijnana*, consciousness, which is at the root.

In the Yogachara, application of yoga, school the concept of *alaya-vijnana*—literally, the abode consciousness—is introduced. They admit only a kind of reality that is of the nature of consciousness, and that objects, which appear to be material or external to consciousness, are but ideas or states of consciousness. One difficult question posed to this doctrine is this: how is it that the subject cannot create at will any object at any time? To explain this the Vijnanavadins say that the subject is a stream of *kshanika*, momentary, consciousness and within the stream there lie buried the *samskaras* of all past experiences. At a particular moment that a *samskara* comes to the surface of consciousness, for which the circumstances are most favourable, and attains maturity, that is, develops into immediate perception. The consciousness considered in its aspect of being a storehouse or substratum consciousness is called *alaya-vijnana*. This answers to the concept of Atman of other schools, with the difference that it is not one unchanging entity but a stream of continuously changing states.⁶ Hence this school is also called the Chittamatravada or Vijnaptimatravada

school. The fundamental concept of the Yogachara school may be expressed by the proposition that the *parinishpanna svabhava*, perfected self-nature, is realized when a person pierces through his or her *parikalpita svabhava*, imagined or illusory self-nature, and develops into the ideal state of nirvana.

Alaya-vijnana contains all the impressions of past actions and future potentialities. It gives rise to thoughts, desire, and attachments, which bind us to the fictitious external world. It is the basis of our personality. It is also called the *mula-vijnana*, the base-consciousness from which awareness and perception spring. *Alaya-vijnana* is not the bed of only attachments and suffering but it also contains the *tathagatagarbha*, Buddha-matrix, through which a person can become a Buddha. Therefore, the real basis of one's personality is the Buddha-like faculty called Buddha-*dhatu*,⁷ latent in every being. The difference between an enlightened being and a deluded one is that the former has manifested his or her Buddha-*dhatu*, while the latter has not. Thus, broadly speaking, the Buddha-*dhatu* implies the ascertaining of that which allows a person to become a Buddha. The *Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra* states that Buddha-*dhatu* is everlasting, pure, and blissful. This work deals primarily with the doctrine of Buddha-nature, which is immanent in all beings.⁸ In the same text it is said: 'That is why I [Buddha] speak about these four things [dharma, meaning, wisdom, and import-embracing sutras] and say that they are the things to be depended upon. "Dharma" is "Dharmata", "meaning" is saying that the Tathagata is Eternal and Unchanging, "Wisdom" is knowing that all beings have Buddha-Nature (Buddhata), "grasping the meaning" means being well versed in all Mahayana sutras.'⁹

The Noble Eightfold Path leads to spiritual enlightenment, which is nothing but the

full manifestation of the Buddha-*dhatu*, or the Tathagata-*dhatu*, in a person. As the Yogacharas lay stress on yoga practices, any person can develop the Buddha-*dhatu* through the appropriate practice of meditation and become a Buddha. The goal of life is to discover this reality, which is the basis of one's personality. *Avidya*, ignorance, is the cause of all suffering, whether past, present, or future; enlightenment destroys ignorance for ever. For an average individual the summation of all physical and mental processes, which are in constant flux, is perceived empirically as 'I'. The empirical 'I' is ephemeral and impermanent, and is *samvriti-satya*, conventional truth—the word *samvrita* literally means 'covered'. The concept of *satya-dvaya*, two categories of truth, which comprises *samvriti-satya* and *paramartha-satya* is an essential element of Buddhism. The *Mahayana Sutralankara*, written by Acharya Asanga, says that a *pudgala*, person, exists in *pragvyapti*, designation; this is *samvriti-satya*, but not in *dravya*, substance. Acharya Asanga's lead is followed throughout this article, where the *samvriti-satya* of the empirical person is considered in the context of *anatmata* or *nairatmya*.

Nirvana is Supreme Bliss

Once Hui-hai Tai-chu came to the Zen—a school of Mahayana Buddhism developed in China and widespread in East Asia—master Ma-tsu Tao-i, the first of the possibly four greatest Chinese Zen masters. Ma-tsu asked him, 'Why are you here searching when you already possess the treasure you are looking for?' 'What treasure?', his interlocutor asked. Ma-tsu replied, 'The one who is questioning me right now.'¹⁰ Ma-tsu had an unswerving ability to bring the empirical 'I' into focus just at the right moment. On another occasion, when asked, 'What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from India?', Ma-tsu replied with a classic Zen answer, 'What

is the meaning of your asking this at precisely this moment?' (Ibid.).


One reacts mentally because one is conscious of something. Mental reactions are of two types: craving and aversion. It is evident that aversion results in suffering, and that craving too results in suffering in the absence of the desired object. Thus, ultimately, whatever is impermanent is *dukkha*, suffering. The renowned sage Buddhaghosha, writer of the *Vishuddhimagga*, Path of Purification, has dwelt elaborately on suffering. Taking the lead from Acharya Nagarjuna, the author posits that *dukkha* is transient; it arises from something else and also decays into extinction. *Dukkha* is not self-determining; its existence and character are attributable to factors that condition its origin and subsequent transformation. Coming into existence and dying out of existence, *dukkha* lacks any trace of permanence. It may be said that *dukkha* lacks *svabhava*, and is characterized by *nihsvabhava*, absence of Self-nature. The author is, therefore, led to formulate the proposition '*dukkhameva shunyam*, suffering is empty'. Because *dukkha* is ephemeral, the author can expand the Sanskrit sentence thus: '*Dukkhameva anityam evam shunyam*, suffering is finite and empty.' The perception of *dukkha*'s emptiness allows one to let go of *dukkha* and be released from the hold that it has on us. Therefore, we can proceed towards enlightenment and improve the quality of our meditation by remembering the Buddha-*dhatu* in us.

The capacity to tread the path to nirvana is already in us, we just have to use it. It is a process of uncovering one's Buddha-*dhatu*. The more our mind is defiled, the more unenlightened we are. Erasing the defilements leads to *bodhi*, enlightenment, and nirvana. In the *Dharmachakra-pravartana Sutra* Buddha says that nirvana is not subject to grief, defilement, disease, decay, and death. In other words, nirvana is beyond

cause and effect; it transcends the conditioned phenomena. Buddha also says that '*nirvanam paramam sukham*; nirvana is supreme bliss'. Nirvana is *apratitya-samutpanna* and *asamskrita*, unconditioned.

It is interesting to note that in the *Lankavatara Sutra*, a Mahayana text associated with the Yogachara school, nirvana is described as the seeing of everything as it is. Nirvana is a positive absolute and is also *nitya*, without beginning and end. Nirvana means a state of mukti, freedom, or *vimukti*, absolute freedom. Nirvana also denotes satya, truth, and shanti, peace. A synonym for nirvana is moksha, liberation. Nirvana is a state of absolute perfection. Sariputra, the famous historical disciple of Buddha, describes nirvana as the extinction of desire, hatred, and illusion. In mystical language nirvana is the experience of standing face to face with Reality. Nirvana is equated with *bodhi* and the *paramartha-satya*. Nirvana is sometimes expressed as the negative of negative, such as the cessation of suffering, of craving, of aversion, and so forth. This need not result in any confusion. In Sanskrit sometimes positive things are expressed as the negatives of negatives, like the word *arogya*, which means 'recuperation from illness', or the word *amrita*, which means 'immortal'. Further, as mathematics proves, the negative of negative is always positive. Nirvana is freeing oneself from the chains of a false sense of individuality. Nirvana is a state of non-duality, *advaita* or *advaya*; a state where the *parikalpita svabhava*, false sense of 'I', does not exist. Expressed differently, nirvana is liberation from the illusion of the separateness of the individual self from the whole.

Enlightened people are free because in them the contact of the six sensory bases with the external world does not produce any reactions. In their case the mind is like a lamp that does not flicker. Non-attachment towards all beings and

towards any other thing, including the concepts of 'I' and 'mine', is a characteristic of an enlightened mind. The absence of ego in enlightened people leads them to adopt an attitude of dispassion and selflessness towards everything in their physical and mental world. They have risen above their previous mental *samskaras*. They are virtuous, always cheerful, happy, and optimistic. They radiate light wherever they go. They are wise and compassionate and do everything for the good of the world. 

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What is Beautiful in the 'Sundara-kanda'?

Surabhi Rathi

TULASIDASA'S *Ramcharitmanas* is renowned for its superb sentiment of devotion. For centuries the religious life of millions has centred on this scripture. It is a long poetic saga of Bhagavan Sri Rama, an incarnation of Vishnu in the Treta Yuga, the second of the four yugas. Its poetic recital makes it a popular scripture among common people, even more than Valmiki's Ramayana. It is composed in Avadhi, a vernacular in North India, and has the flavour of commoners' dialect. Its syntactical form is of rhyming couplets called *doha*, *choupayi*, *chanda*, and *soratha*. Both syntax and semantics blend appealingly to create a soothing effect on readers and listeners. Its seven sections are: 'Bala-kanda', 'Ayodhya-kanda', 'Aranya-kanda', 'Kishkindha-kanda', 'Sundara-kanda', 'Lanka-kanda', and 'Uttara-kanda'. Though 'Uttara-kanda' is not named after a particular context, it is a kind of epilogue and includes some peripheral storylines and philosophical discourses that could not be accommodated within the main story.

The fifth section is the 'Sundara-kanda', beautiful section, and is also found as the fifth section of Valmiki's Ramayana and Vyasa's *Adhyatma Ramayana*. It is commonly believed that the recital of the 'Sundara-kanda' cures physical and mental ills and also attenuates a person's negative karma. The theme of this article is to understand why this section is so named and what its philosophical implications are. The title has no apparent link with the main story; it could very well be contextually named 'Anveshana-kanda', as it deals with the search for Sita. But the section contains a mine of spiritual knowledge and values that if properly

understood can change one's personality. It is well known that morality and truthfulness make a person beautiful; the opposite of them make for ugliness, however polished our outside may be.

Hanuman Meets Rama

Hanuman, the superhero of the Ramayana, is a perfect master of his senses and a brahmachari. The story says that the purpose of Hanuman's birth was exclusively to serve Rama in rescuing the captive Sita from Ravana in Lanka. Hanuman is not able to recognize Rama when they first meet on mount Rishyamukha. Hanuman is sent by Sugriva, his king, to find out who Rama and Lakshmana are and what intention and purpose they have, as they are climbing towards Sugriva's hiding place. When Rama introduces himself, Hanuman regrets that his insight was incapable of recognizing his eternal master and needed an introduction. A moving verse expresses his guilt: 'In the first place, I am dull-witted and deluded, perverse of heart and ignorant, and then you too, my Blessed Lord, friend of the humble, forgot me.'¹ This pure devotion of Hanuman is truly unveiled later during Hanuman's meeting with Sita. Though captive in Ravana's kingdom Sita, who is sitting with downcast eyes, is not meek or defenceless. She is absorbed in yoga, with Rama as the object of her meditation: 'Your name', says Hanuman, 'is the watchman who guards her by day and night; her contemplation of you is the gate; her eyes fixed on her feet are the fetters; through what door, then, can her life flit away?' (465).

During his sojourn in Kishkindha, Rama is overwhelmed with sorrow like a common person

whose wife has been abducted. He seeks help, and that too from monkeys and bears, to rescue Sita. Although Rama is a great heroic warrior and a prince, capable of averting misfortunes and defeating Ravana, yet he gives Hanuman his signet ring with a message for Sita, as he knew only Hanuman could go to Lanka and find out Sita's whereabouts. Sri Ramakrishna says: 'Not all, by any means, can recognize an Incarnation of God. Assuming a human body, the Incarnation falls victim to disease, hunger, thirst, and all such things, like ordinary mortals. Rama wept for Sita.'²

What is really beautiful in the 'Sundara-kanda'? It is the revelation of the highest Truth to Hanuman by Rama. Among many other characters present in the *Ramcharitmanas*, it is in Hanuman that spiritual realization dawns. Truth is beautiful and auspicious—*satyam-shivam-sundaram*—and when it dawns in a person, it transforms life and makes the person truthful, beautiful, and auspicious. 'God has different forms, and He sports in different ways. He sports as Ishvara, deva, man, and the universe. In every age He descends on earth in human form, as an Incarnation, to teach people love and devotion' (257). Hanuman's valorous service, complete surrender, devotion, and knowledge made him a fit recipient for Truth.

Hanuman is well known for his powers and sterling devotion. Interestingly, both these qualities are highlighted in the 'Kishkindha-kanda'. At the beginning of this section the dialogue of his first meeting with Rama is in consonance with the divine purpose of his life and his devotion. The section closes with Jambavan reminding Hanuman of his gigantic powers: "The king of the bears then turned towards Hanuman, "Listen, O mighty Hanuman, why do you remain silent, you who are so valorous? You are the Son of the Wind and strong as your father, a storehouse of intelligence, discretion and

spiritual wisdom. What undertaking is there in the world, my friend, too difficult for you to accomplish? It is to serve Rama's purpose that you have come down upon earth." Hearing these words, he grew to the size of a mountain.'³ These words not only revive Hanuman's memory of his powers and abilities but also remind him that his super powers are only for his Ishta Devata, Chosen Deity, Rama. This unique characteristic, desirelessness, is the basis of devotion.

Hanuman, whose name means 'hurt chin' or 'large jawed,' received his name when, as a child, he jumped to catch the sun and was stopped by Indra's thunderbolt hitting his chin. Symbolically, Hanuman also suggests one who has subjugated the ego, for where there is the ego, God is far away.

According to the *Hanuman Chalisa*, Hanuman possesses the ability to bestow the *ashtha siddhis*, eight supernatural powers, and *nava nidhis*, nine types of wealth. 'You can grant to any one the eight yogic *siddhis* and nine *nidhis*; these powers have been conferred upon you by Mother Janaki. You possess the *Rama-rasayana* (essence of Rama), you will always remain Raghupati's dedicated servant.'⁴ The eight *siddhis* are *anima*, reducing one's body to the size of an atom; *laghima*, becoming weightless; *mahima*, expanding one's body to an immense size; *garima*, becoming extremely heavy; *prapti*: having unrestricted access to all places; *prakamya*, realizing whatever one desires; *ishitva*, possessing absolute lordship; and *vashitva*, the power to subjugate nature. The nine *nidhis* are *parakaya pravesha*, ability to enter into another body, even a dead one; *hadi vidya*, being immune to hunger or thirst for a long time; *kadi vidya*, being unaffected by extremes of heat and cold; *vayu-gamana siddhi*, capability to swiftly travel through the air; *madalasa vidya*, ability to alter body size; *kanakadhara siddhi*, to attain enormous riches; *prakya* sadhana, directing souls

to wombs, even to barren women; *surya vijnana*, transformation of one substance into another through the medium of sun's rays; and *mrita-sanjivani vidya*, bringing a dead person to life.

Hanuman possesses the Rama-rasayana. *Rasa* has many meanings, some of which are juice, sap, essence, elixir, quintessence, flavour, aesthetics, taste, and so on, but the principal one is that '[the Creator] is verily *rasa*, the source of joy, for one becomes happy by coming in contact with that joy.'⁵ It is necessary to ponder on the confluence of ethical aesthetics and aesthetic ethics in the real sense of their terms. Hanuman obtains *siddhis* and *nidhis* from Sita, who is centred in Rama, and Hanuman also possesses the Rama-rasayana. Rama is the source of the world, and Sita is part of him. Everything in the world, seen and unseen, is made of Rama and Sita. It is a divine world! Sri Ramakrishna says: 'I see Rama in all things. You are all sitting here, but I see only Rama in every one of you.'⁶ This is the real beauty of the world, and Hanuman had obtained this beauty.

Ethics and Aesthetics

There is a common notion of unity between beauty and morality across cultures. The Greek philosopher Plato used the term *kalon*, that which attracts the soul to finer things, before the development of a formal theory of art in Western philosophy. It is to be distinguished from visual attractiveness or appearances.⁷ The Greek phrase *kalon kai agathon* refers to the search for the good and the beautiful or noble in life—the good and the beautiful were not distinct and were seen as identical (24).

Beauty, even till the Middle Ages, was linked with divinity, metaphysics, and theology. Umberto Eco says that the close link between beauty—*pulchrum*, *decorum*—and, utility or goodness—*aptum*, *honestum*—during the medieval times did not make a strict distinction between religious,

moral, political, and artistic values.⁸ Clement Greenberg says that the play of art in the deep structures of cultures—where art, folklore, and religion mingle—are barely distinguishable. The significance of art in religion was well recognized.⁹ It is this aspect of art that has value and significance and the one that develops a particular way of seeing objects, life, and the world. A clear distinction between the good and the beautiful has its origin in the eighteenth century. Alexander Baumgarten uses the term 'aesthetic' for beauty, but it was different from good or utility.¹⁰

The severing of the distinction between aesthetics and ethics comes, apparently, from Immanuel Kant. However, he believes that there is some sort of analogy between aesthetics and ethics by regarding beauty as the symbol of morality.¹¹ In expounding this subject Kant stresses the depiction of a priori concepts possible only through intuition, which are portrayed by means of schemata or symbols. Kant highlights the extraordinary significance of universals. This keen observation reminds us of the special significance of aesthetics, or what is more specifically known as the right way of seeing an object—'a good work of art is a complete expression', according to Wittgenstein.¹² It is the holistic view, the logical whole seen *with* space and time; seen *sub specie aeternitatis*, under the aspect of eternity (ibid). The merit of the arts lies in revealing, through their perfection, this universality of objects. In the words of Kant:

The propaedeutic to all fine art, so far as the highest degree of its perfection is what is in view, appears to lie, not in precepts, but in the culture of the mental powers produced by a sound preparatory education in what are called the humaniora so-called [*sic*], presumably, because humanity signifies, on the one hand, the universal feeling of sympathy, and on the other, the faculty of being able to communicate

universally one's inmost self-properties, constituting in conjunction the befitting social spirit of mankind, in contradistinction to the narrow life of the lower animals.¹³

Just as Kant's contribution is significant in the history of philosophy and aesthetics, so is the relevance of Wittgenstein's viewpoints about ethics, aesthetics, and their integration. Their terminology is special. For example, Wittgenstein has remarks that are almost aphoristic, like this one: 'It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words, as ethics is transcendental. Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same.'¹⁴ According to Wittgenstein, 'style' can represent the conceptual understanding of ethics and aesthetics, along with the role of analogies in the absence of linguistic possibility. Relative good or beauty is mundane and limited; absolute good or beauty, as a concept, is free of personalized relative valuation.

However, the following remark throws light on the issue for some detailed analysis: 'The work of art is the object seen *sub specie aeternitatis*; and the good life is the world seen *sub specie aeternitatis*. This is the connection between art and ethics.'¹⁵ Two aspects of the link between art and ethics emerge from these words: the connection between a work of art and a good life and between objects and the world. Wittgenstein says: 'Now I am going to use the term Ethics in a slightly wider sense, in a sense in fact which includes what I believe to be the most essential part of what is generally called Aesthetics.'¹⁶ Objects are meta-parts of the world, and everything in the composite world is factual. But, their perception is chosen by limited mundane interests. This is diametrically opposite to the *sub specie aeternitatis* view of objects and the world. In the context of the 'Sundara-kanda', Hanuman is not afflicted with a limited view; he has a holistic view and acts *with* space and time. This gives him creative abundance of intellect and energy to perform

extraordinary acts. Yet, his worldly disinterestedness keeps him grounded in humble devotion.

Hanuman's Beauty

The purpose of human life is to attain an ethical-aesthetic unity by first minimizing our miseries, which arise from desires and aversions. Pure aspiration seems distant only when one has an inflated ego. We can learn this through Hanuman's exemplary conduct. The moving portrayal in the following line is the element of beauty in the 'Sundara-kanda'. It is the central message of the *Ramcharitmanas*. 'Again and again the Lord sought to raise him up, but he was so absorbed in love that he would not rise. The lotus hands of the Lord rested on his head.'¹⁷ Hanuman is merged in pure devotion. Rama praises Hanuman for his unselfish noble help, but Hanuman remains helplessly at Rama's feet: "Listen Hanuman", said Rama, "no god or man or sage that has ever been born into this world has been such a benefactor to me as you. What service can I do you in return? When I think of it, I am unable to look you in the face. Upon reflection my son, I have come to the conclusion that I cannot ever repay you". Again and again as the protector of the gods gazed on Hanuman, his eyes filled with tears and his whole body quivered with emotion' (ibid.).

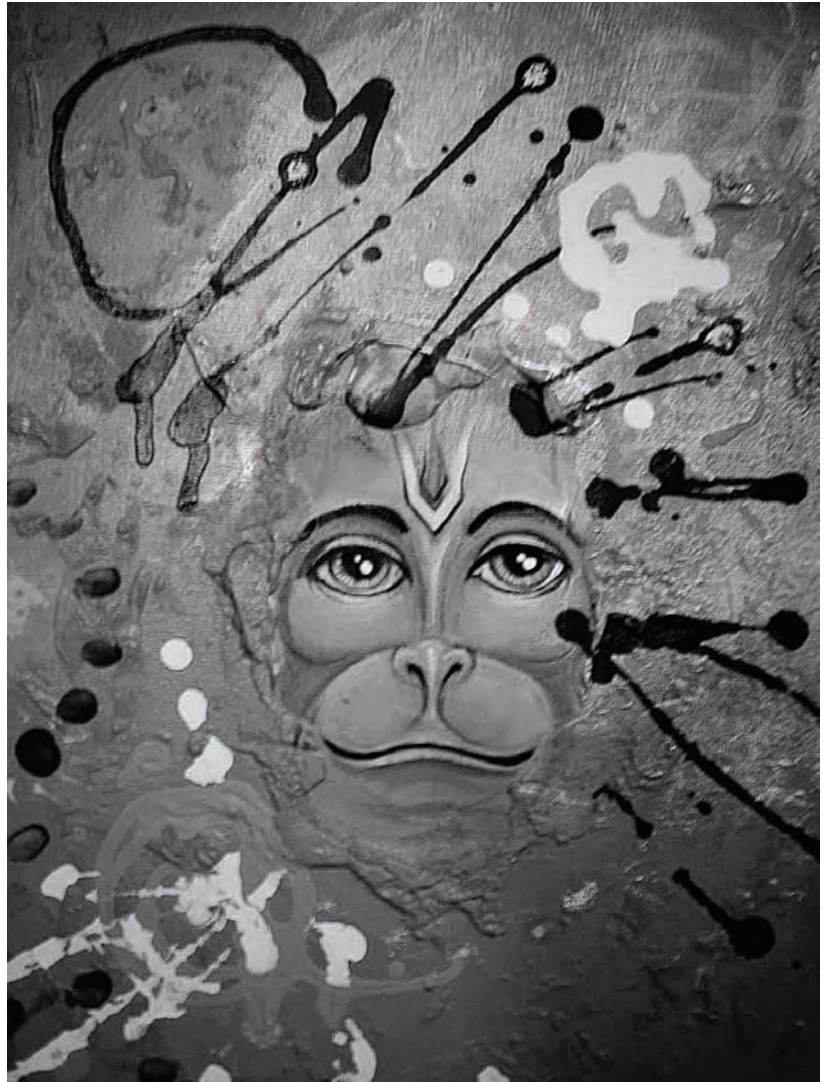
Rama praises Hanuman by addressing him as 'son'. To be praised by one's master, who in this case is God, is the highest reward for any devotee. But, acknowledging praise is not so praiseworthy. The important point in the 'Sundara-kanda' is about obtaining God's blessings for unwavering devotion. With God's grace alone can one conquer the outer as well as the inner demons. Hanuman's reply to Rama's praise is filled with valour and devotion: 'When Hanuman heard what his Lord said and gazed on his face and body beaming with delight, he

experienced a thrill of joy all over his body and fell at his feet crying out in an ecstasy of devotion, "save me, save me, O Blessed Lord" (ibid.). Overwhelmed with devotion Hanuman does not want to forego the shelter of the Lord's lotus feet and utters: '*Trahi, trahi*; save me, save me.' Hanuman has returned a hero, having exhibited valour and wisdom, crossed the ocean, braved all obstacles, and burnt Lanka. It is clear that he is fearless and has powers, yet he says '*trahi, trahi*'.

What does Hanuman fear and why does he cry out for Rama's protection? Hanuman's behaviour signifies the inverse relationship between

spirituality and physicality. Hanuman's sole aim in serving Rama suggests that he is not bothered about mundane life. However, a devotee who has not yet transcended the needs of the body knows that God sustains creation. The Bhagavadgita declares: 'Those persons who, becoming non-different from me and meditative, worship me everywhere, for them, who are ever attached (to me), I arrange for securing what they lack and preserving what they have.'¹⁸ A devotee, by abandoning material wants, subjugates the ego, as in the case of Vibhishana's devotional surrender to Rama. Vibhishana was shunned by his brother

'Hanuman'
by R D DeSoto




Ravana when the former pointed out Ravana's unethical conduct and asked him to surrender to Rama. And we know the price Ravana had to pay for not heeding Vibhishana's advice. The Gita also says: 'One who is deluded by egoism thinks thus: "I am the doer"' (3.27).

Hanuman is not under any egoistic delusion by thinking in this way: 'I have accomplished the impossible and Rama is praising me before everyone.' All his super powers and accomplishments have not made him egotistical but *egoless*, and hence his '*trahi, trahi*' is pure and beautifully spiritual. The *ahamkara*, ego, in the *antahkarana*, inner-instrument, is the subtlest and greatest obstacle to experience identification with Brahman. During their first meeting in Kishkindha, Hanuman humbly submitted to Rama, but Rama did not praise him then; now what confronts Hanuman's devotion is his valorous deeds and Rama's praise. But Hanuman is firmly convinced that he has been only an instrument of Rama's divine will, and that Rama is the source of creation. This egolessness is Hanuman's greatest quality. This is clearly shown in a touching dialogue of the 'Sundara-kanda'. Rama embraces Hanuman, takes him by the hand, and asks him:

'Tell me Hanuman, how could you contrive to burn Ravana's stronghold of Lanka, a most impregnable fortress?' When Hanuman found the Lord so gracious, he replied in words of singular modesty: 'A monkey's greatest valour lies in his skipping about from one branch to another. That I should have been able to leap across the ocean, burn the golden city, slay the demon host and lay waste the *ashoka* grove—was all due to your might, Raghunatha; in no sense was the strength my own, my Lord. Nothing, Lord, is unattainable to him who enjoys your favour; through your might a mere shred of cotton can surely burn up the fire beneath the sea. Be pleased O Lord, to grant me

unceasing devotion, which is a source of the highest bliss.'¹⁹

God is the source of all beauty, and since Hanuman is completely identified with God, all of Hanuman's deeds become beautiful. This is the essence of the 'Sundara-kanda'. 

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Overview of Vivekananda's Talent for Music

Swami Sandarshananda

MUSIC HAS PLAYED a major role in the formation of Indian religious culture and spirituality from ancient times. Music pervades every aspect of Indian life today, and classical music, which was neglected for centuries, is today finding larger appreciative audiences in India and the rest of the world. There are two principal styles of classical music prevalent in India: Hindustani in the North, and Carnatic in the South. From a more or less common source, the two styles diverged gradually from the thirteenth century. Basically, two traditional ways of singing are current in Hindustani music: dhrupad and khayal. Dhrupad is comparatively older and exclusively Indian, evolving from the roots of the Sama Veda. Khayal, on the other hand, is relatively new and is a combination of dhrupad and musical practices of Arabia and Persia. It is the result of experiments conducted by some musicians and musicologists during the Mughal period. These experiments in Hindustani music had no role in the development of Carnatic music, but true lovers of music, whether Hindu or Muslim, were equally impressed by them. To master classical music needs long years of rigorous discipline, which was propagated from generation to generation, through a sacred *parampara*, tradition, of *guru-shishya*, guru-disciple.

Music of Devotees

Dhrupad is the short form of *dhruva-pada*, meaning 'fixed word' or 'fixed note'; its style is heavy and majestic, requiring much stamina to sing. Originally, most dhrupad singers were ardent devotees of God; they sang primarily for his

love. If they sang in public at all, it was before the temple deities who they viewed as living. Otherwise, they preferred to sing in seclusion, pouring out their hearts to God through their music. To become immersed in God's glories through music was their purpose.

To such musicians every note is the fixed seat of a particular subsidiary god or goddess. They held that to be able to produce a note most perfectly is to realize that god or goddess and become blessed and blissful. When all the notes are realized in their real forms, they believed, the ultimate Reality or the God of all gods and goddesses is attained. The more they can sing in this manner, the more God is pleased, and eventually their desired *mukti*, spiritual emancipation, is guaranteed. The serious singers of khayal are no exception; they too sing to God. Of the many meanings of the word 'khayal', one is 'mental image'. In order to capture God, as it were, devoted singers of classical music assiduously use the technique of khayal to create a melodious mesh of intricate *sur*, tone, and *tala*, time beat.

In dhrupad as well as in khayal, a *tanpura* is used as an indispensable accompanying instrument. Apparently a drone instrument, a *tanpura* functions like a raft that carries a piece of music from the beginning to the end. It keeps music wafting in space, weaving a celestial atmosphere. The accompanying drum in dhrupad is *pakhawaj*, which is believed to have been played by the god Ganesha when Lord Shiva danced to create the universe in a perfect rhythm. The *pakhawaj* has a lot of pious associations and a sacred past. In khayal, the *tabla* is the accompanying drum—the *tabla* was produced later by splitting

a pakhawaj in the middle. When these instruments are being played together and according to the science and discipline of music, along with a seasoned and sweet voice that can evoke the sentiment of a raga, a trained audience is transported to a different sublime world.

The word ‘raga’ comes from the word *rang*, meaning ‘colour’—the colours of nature, which change from hour to hour and season to season, bringing out variations in the moods of human beings. In an effort to represent that evolved feeling through music, a raga is played by improvisation but maintains its individuality through notes arranged in a particular structure suited to that mood. Once Vivekananda was taken to hear his first symphony concert while in Chicago by Mrs John B Lyon, ‘he listened with great

attention but with his head a bit on one side and a slightly quizzical expression.’¹ After the concert, when asked how he enjoyed the music, he said that it was beautiful. On being pressed he replied:

First, I do not understand why the program says that this same program will be repeated on Saturday evening. You see in India, one type of music is played at dawn. The music for noon-time is very different, and that for the evening is also of a special character. So I should think that what sounds suitable to your ears in the early afternoon would not sound harmonious to you at night. The other thing that seems strange to me is the lack of overtones in the music and the greater intervals between the notes. To my ears it has holes in it like that good Swiss cheese you give me! (1.156)

Pakhawaj and tanpura used by Swamiji



Music in Vivekananda's Calcutta

Two families conspicuously promoted classical music in nineteenth century Calcutta: one was the Tagore family of Jorasanko, and the other the Datta family of Simulia; both settled in the same locality. The story of the former is well known, but that of the latter is scarcely known. At that time Bengal was vibrant with the styles of dhruwad, dhamar, khayal, thumri, bhajan, and kirtan by virtue of the migration of many celebrated musicians from Delhi and other places of North India during the reign of Bahadur Shah around 1765. Musicians were supported by the patronage of the rich in Calcutta, Serampore, Chunchura [Chinsurah], Murshidabad, Hooghly, and in various other suburban and rural areas. The elite of Calcutta were specifically inclined towards dhruwad. The influence of the Vishnupur gharana, school of musical style, was powerful in Bengal at the time, of which Jadu Bhatta—Jadunath Bhattacharya (1840–83)—was then one of the greatest exponents. Khayal and thumri gained popularity among Bengalis only when

Nawab Wajed Ali came and settled at Metiabruz in Calcutta, after being deposed by the British from Lucknow in 1858. During this period there was everywhere a free participation among Hindu and Muslim musicians, at times even playing together. This proved that the appeal of Hindustani classical music is sublime and perennial, having no room for parochialism.

Vivekananda's younger brothers tell us that their family had been deeply immersed in classical music for generations, and they knew well that their grandfather Durgaprasad Datta and father Vishwanath Datta were good vocalists and connoisseurs of classical music. Both had become proficient by learning under the tutelage of prominent teachers. Hence, it was a norm in the family that they should have *addas*, music sessions, at home with accomplished musicians every Saturday and Sunday. This indeed provided Narendranath—as Vivekananda was known in his pre-monastic days—an ample opportunity during his boyhood to embellish his natural talent and aptitude for music; his prodigious memory and creative ingenuity helped him to reproduce whatever he had heard and absorbed earlier. Noticeably, from his early childhood until he became an itinerant monk, his habit of learning music remained undiminished. His youngest brother Bhupendranath Datta writes: 'Narendra had great proficiency in classical music. He inherited this trait from his father who practised it in his youth.'²

That is how Narendranath had his fundamental lessons in music from his father—Vishwanath had learnt different kinds of classical music from ustads, masters of music, wherever his job as a young attorney took him, in North and central India. It is recorded that Vishwanath had stayed in Lucknow, Delhi, Lahore, Rajasthan, Indore,



The Esraj

Raipur, and Bilaspur from time to time. This aided Narendranath substantially as he accompanied his father to Raipur at the age of fourteen and spent a couple of years there, dedicating himself to the study of music with an undivided mind and under parental care. Later he had the needed guidance from proficient teachers such as Amritlal Datta, Surendranath Datta, Beni Ustad, Ustad Ahmad Khan, and others in Calcutta, of whom the former two happened to be his close relatives. Beni Ustad, or Beni Gupta, was a disciple of Ahmad Khan. When only eighteen or nineteen years old Narendranath achieved a reputation as a *dhrupadiya*, dhrupad singer; his voice was deep, poignant, powerful, and charming, as a good *dhrupadiya* should have.

It is interesting to note that he became proficient not only in vocal music but in instrumental music as well. He acquired skills to play pakhawaj, tabla, esraj, and sitar. Though it is not precisely known who his teachers for these instruments were, it can be presumed that he must have been trained by the able musicians of the Brahmo Samaj, with whom he had close contact until he became a monk. The musicians of the Brahmo Samaj were highly acclaimed and knowledgeable—presumably, he had grooming in pakhawaj and tabla from Kashi Ghoshal and

in esraj from Jagannath Mishra. He used to practise for hours in seclusion in a small room on the first floor of his maternal grandmother's house.

Musician and Musicologist

The young Narendranath was widely appreciated as an extraordinary singer and vocalist due to his excellent performances of the superb mood, and his sense of *sur*, *tala*, and *laya*, time—people thronged to listen to him again and again. He gave recitals on invitations pouring from the Brahmo Samaj, friends, and relatives. He sometimes even performed in the absence of a mature *dhrupadiya* in religious dramas at the Brahmo Samaj. In one such drama, titled 'Nava-Vrindavan' and written by Trailokyanath Sanyal, he captured the imagination of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, who was seated among the audience. In this drama his lofty songs in *dhrupad-anga* in the role of Jogibar Abhedananda captivated Sri Ramakrishna. Eulogizing him Sri Ramakrishna used to tell others that Naren can sing and play equally well.

Devendranath Tagore was so fond of him that he would often have Narendranath sing only to him. He found in him a mystical quality that was missing in most of the musicians Devendranath received. Thus, Narendranath achieved a free access to the Tagore family from the very outset. Besides, he had a friendly relationship with Rabindranath, Devendranath's son. He sang Rabindranath's songs on more than one occasion and included some of them in his compilation—Rabindranath was then perhaps twenty and Narendranath eighteen. As a follower of *dhrupad*, Narendranath used to sing the compositions of Swami Haridas, Mian Tansen, Baiju Bawra, Nayak Gopal, and others of the same class.

In his early twenties, Narendranath became a mature musicologist. In 1887, at twenty-three,

he left his mark through the book *Sangita Kalpataru*, in Bengali, co-authored with Vaishnavcharan Basak. Basak expressly says in the preface of the publication that most of its material was prepared by the co-author 'Babu Narendranath Datta', but Narendranath was not able to finish it himself because of serious personal problems. True, Narendranath was then besieged by a number of hindrances. Firstly, his father passed away suddenly and he was in desperate need of a job to support his mother and younger brothers. Secondly, he got badly entangled in litigation with some of his relatives who wanted to unfairly grab his ancestral property, throwing his family out of the house. Thirdly, his burning desire to renounce worldly life and take up the life of a sannyasin for the realization of God made him restless. Finally, he had the onerous task of keeping his brother disciples together and of leading a budding monastic organization, the foundation of which was laid by his guru who had just passed away. Amazingly, amid such varied dire disturbances, he made remarkable progress in writing the book and preparing the manuscript to a large extent. Basak says that when he saw Narendranath unable to resume writing for a year, he stepped in and added the little left to be completed. Anyone who has gone through the work knows well how dexterously and comprehensibly Narendranath deals with the technical aspects, treating vocal and instrumental music almost with equal expertise. 'In its elaborate Introduction various aspects of the science and art of vocal and instrumental Indian music are discussed with masterly knowledge and insight. The major part of the book named 'Sangita Sangraha' contains devotional and inspirational songs composed in various languages of India. In the appendix of the book biographical information is provided about the composers of the songs.'³

In the book Narendranath masterly handles the science and art of Indian classical music with unusual knowledge and insight. He shows that the originality of this music survives in dhrupad and kirtan. But he proposes to leave singing the softness infusing kirtan for a while, which was to him effeminate, and instead sing the strength inspiring dhrupad more intensely. As he praises the existence of *mir-murchana*, cadence, he also points out the deficiency of harmony that renders Indian classical music somewhat weak in *vira-rasa*, heroic mood. He appreciates the compositions in 'Bangla' from the Brahmo Samaj and suggests that the language should be applied more for facile propagation of classical music in Bengal. He translated *Gita Govindam* of Jaideva from Sanskrit to Bengali.

Spiritual Urge Expressed

But the main purpose of Vivekananda's life was not to become a flamboyant musician. Music to him was a useful means to pacify his struggling soul; it was something to lend shape to his inner spiritual urge, which was best understood by his spiritual teacher Sri Ramakrishna. His devotional singing would immediately send his guru into samadhi; there is no other example in the history of hagiography that can be compared to this typical phenomenon. For instance, at Balaram Bose's residence, on 14 July 1885, he sang seven bhajans to Sri Ramakrishna and the latter lost his outer consciousness into deep samadhi, manifesting the signs of the bliss of God's love all over his physique. Sri Ramakrishna had once said to Vivekananda: 'He who dwells here (*touching his heart*), like a snake, hisses as it were, and then, spreading His hood, quietly holds Himself steady and listens to your music.'⁴ The teacher and the taught were subtly tuned to the same divine sentiment, in which music creates a catalytic effect and makes it possible to climb in a

moment the heights of spirituality. Sri Ramakrishna was an 'amphibian', as it were, who could swim in the bliss of the transcendental Reality in samadhi now and the next moment exult, with an equal ease, in a temporal atmosphere with ordinary people.

Narendranath performed dhrupad concerts at Girishchandra Ghosh's residence as well. Gopal Mallik, one of the then greatest pakhawaj players of Bengal, accompanied him—to be able to sing with a musician of Mallik's attainments speaks of Narendranath's exceptionally mature sense of *sur*, tala, and *laya*. There are allusions that he too accompanied others by playing pakhawaj many times. During his wandering days many were charmed and astonished when he used to sing. In Bhagalpur at the house of Manmathanath Chowdhury, some musicians and singers were invited in the evening, several of whom were ustads.

Believing that the music would end by nine or ten at the latest, I did not arrange supper for the guests. Swamiji sang without ceasing till two or three o'clock in the morning. All without exception were so charmed that they forgot hunger and thirst and all idea of time! None moved from his seat or thought of going home. Kailashbabu, who was accompanying the Swami [on Tabla?] in his songs, was forced to give up finally, for his fingers had become stiff and had lost all sensation. Such superhuman power I have never seen in anybody, nor do I expect to see it again.⁵

Evidently, music was an inalienable element in Vivekananda's life. Even while in the West he would spontaneously break into melodious bhajans now and then and, though the language and style were strange to the Western listeners, his voice and the songs' sweet devotional essence were dear and transporting. Vivekananda was conversant with Western music too; once

during his stay in the Mysore palace as a guest of the Maharaja, he 'was introduced to a noted Austrian musician with whom he had a discussion on European music. All were amazed at the Swami's knowledge of Western music' (1.323).

After establishing the Ramakrishna Mission in 1897 Vivekananda concentrated on the formation of its monasteries. He considered music a core issue in the life of the ashramas. Devotional singing and the chanting of sacred hymns in proper traditional tune and rhythm became an indispensable part of the monastic life of the Ramakrishna Order. He gave the lyrics and set them to the *choutala* tune, accompanied by pakhawaj, tanpura, khandani, and gong, to be sung in *dhrupada-anga* during vespers. Beginning in *vilambit laya* the hymn ends in the *druta laya*, exuding the rasa of temple music suffused with the love of God. Although he never directly mentions the name of Sri Ramakrishna, he nevertheless impeccably brings out in the song Sri Ramakrishna's divine character as an incarnation of God. Some of his songs are rich in non-dualistic content, as they were composed soon after experiencing *nirvikalpa* samadhi. For example, 'Nahi Surya Nahi Jyoti' and 'Ekarupa Arupa Nama Baran' were, according to Swami Abhedananda, two songs that Vivekananda composed in a high state of mind. In this connection another song also deserves mention here: 'Deshahin Sarvahn Neti Neti'.

There are nine ways to bhakti, namely: *shra-vana*, listening to the glories of God; *smarana*, remembering God; *kirtana*, singing devotional hymns and songs; *padasevana*, service; *archana*, ritual worship; *vandana*, obeisance; *dasya*, cultivating the servant attitude; *sakhya*, attitude of a friend; and *atmanivedana*, surrendering oneself. Of these, kirtana is suited to all because of its strong universal appeal. Vivekananda made it all the more attractive, filling his

musical creation with all the six sterling qualities of *sahitya*, lyrics; *shruti*, pitch; raga, pattern of notes; *laya*, tempo; tala, timing; and *bhavana*, mood, which help one to easily gravitate towards God. He composed and collected several other songs, which, along with his *Sangita Kalpataru*, should be a source of in-depth study. Serious research could reveal other important truths about Vivekananda, who could perhaps be presented as the Haridas, the venerated guru of Mian Tansen, of modern times.

That Vivekananda was a dedicated protagonist of dhrupad in the nineteenth century is evident in each of his musical endeavours. He gave primacy to dhrupad because he was also a worshipper of the Nada Brahma, Brahman denoted by the word Om. Following the trail of music he wanted to transcend all sound and become one with Om. Hence, he summed up his feeling by saying: 'Music is the highest art and, to those who understand, is the highest worship.'⁶ Since each *pada*, note, is *dhruva*, absolute, in *dhruva-pada*, to be perfect in it is to attain God or moksha.

Na vidya sangitat parah.

No knowledge is superior to music.



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Educational Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda

Mohit Puri and Dr Pardeep Kumar

(Continued from the May issue)

Character-Building

TO SWAMIJI CHASTITY IS a basic virtue and essential for the growth of cultures and civilizations. Many ancient civilizations were gradually destroyed due to its citizens' lack of self-control after having reached a comfortable level of material and intellectual development. An unchaste mind is restless and prone to stress and depression. In society the root of all criminality is unrestrained lust. Chastity gives tremendous power to the mind and the body. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that *manush*, a person, needs to be *man-hush*, aware of personal dignity: 'He alone is a man whose spiritual consciousness has been awakened.'⁷ Following his Master, Swamiji emphasizes that 'the ideal of all education, all training, should be this man-making.'⁸ Lamenting over the prevailing system of education he says: 'We are always trying to polish up the outside. What use in polishing up the outside when there is no inside? The end and aim of all training is to make the man grow' (ibid.).

In order to rectify the defects in education and society, the limited view of humankind on which the existing system is based needs to be reconstructed. A human being is not simply a composite of body and mind but the Atman, which has to be uncovered by entering and exploring the vast inner dimensions of the personality. A limited view of the human being has made humankind weak and prone to selfishness and other social and mental ills. There is no doubt that

today's education neglects the spiritual side of people, whose minds are not directed to higher pursuits of life, and consequently their hidden potentials remain undiscovered. Only when wisdom, peace, strength, unselfishness, loving concern for others, and other virtues are developed is a person transformed into a true human being.

An unprecedented explosion of knowledge without wisdom and immense power not tempered with discernment has made present-day education a source of danger. As Swamiji observes: 'Intellect has been cultured with the result that hundreds of sciences have been discovered, and their effect has been that the few have made slaves of the many—that is all the good that has been done. Artificial wants have been created; and every poor man, whether he has money or not, desires to have those wants satisfied, and when he cannot, he struggles, and dies in the struggle' (1.414). In order to counter this uneven development, Swamiji strongly recommends the adoption of a spiritual culture, and he looks upon religion as the core of education. But by religion he does not mean any particular religion; religion to him means the true eternal principles that inspire every religion. In order to be worthwhile an effective education must be rooted in the science of spirituality, and not in dogma. This is what touches the heart and has the potential to effect desirable changes in one's motivation. It also gives mental strength

and broadness of outlook. Discussing the practical implications of morality Swamiji observes: 'What is meant by morality? Making the subject strong by attuning it to the Absolute, so that finite nature ceases to have control over us' (2.137).

Character-building is fundamental in Swamiji's concept of education, as opposed to career-orientation, which is the focus of today's educational system. A person is what his thoughts have made him or her. Explaining this the swami says: 'Each thought is a little hammer blow on the lump of iron which our bodies are, manufacturing out of it what we want it to be' (7.20). That is why one finds that the focus of the swami's educational thought is on man-making, character-building ideas. Swamiji teaches that everything a person thinks and does leaves an impression on the mind. Even when it is not outwardly apparent, it is strong enough to work beneath the surface. A person's character is determined by the sum total of these impressions. When a large number of these impressions come together, they form a habit. This then becomes a powerful force, for character is but repeated habits. This is why through the acquisition and repetition of desirable habits one's character can be remodelled. The people one associates with, good or bad, contribute much to the development of one's character. In fact, their impact is greater than that of didactic teaching. Swamiji says: 'Words, even thoughts, contribute only one-third of the influence in making an impression, the man, two-thirds' (2.14). He, therefore, desires that the teacher's life and personality be like a blazing fire that is able to produce a positive influence on the pupils. Exposure to exemplary role models, particularly teachers, and also to wholesome curriculum materials that impart culturally-approved values to the young are critical to character-building.

Character-building education should teach how to discern between the real and unreal. The students must imbibe the conviction to take moral values seriously. The present education system has overemphasized the cultivation of the intellect at the cost of the general well-being of humanity. In one of his lectures, Swamiji expresses his desire: 'Would to God that all men were so constituted that in their minds *all* these elements of philosophy, mysticism, emotion, and of work were equally present in full! That is the ideal, my ideal of a perfect man' (2.388). And the swami expects that the educational systems be suitably designed to produce such wholesome human beings. Interestingly, a UNESCO report titled *Learning to Be* defines the aim of education by echoing this idea: 'The physical, the intellectual, emotional and ethical integration of the individual into a complete man is a broad definition of the fundamental aim of education.'

Education and the Needy

Up to here we have discussed education primarily in the context of the section of society that already benefits from it. Swamiji, however, was a genuine friend of the needy and the weak, particularly the helpless masses of India, and he was the first Indian leader who sought a solution to their problems through education. He argues that a nation is advanced to the extent that education and culture reach the masses. Unless there is a uniform circulation of the national blood all over the body, the nation cannot rise. He insists that it is the duty of upper classes, who have received their education at the expense of the poor, to come forward and lift them through education and other means. In fact, the swami's mission is for the needy, as he expresses: 'If there is inequality in nature, still there must be equal chance for all—or if greater for some and for some less—the weaker should be given more chance than the strong' (7.319).

The trend in recent years has been to shift the responsibility from educational institutions, teachers, and the family to public authorities, particularly the state. Yet, in spite of this shift, education has hardly reached the majority of underprivileged sections. As the needy are often victims of malnutrition, unhygienic conditions, and overcrowded housing, they can hardly take advantage of any opportunity that is offered by society. Swamiji says: 'So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them' (5,58).

Swamiji felt that alienation of any kind from the masses, whether through learning, wealth, or force, weakens the whole of society. Therefore, for a sustainable regeneration of India priority must be given to educating the masses and restoring their lost individuality, along with creating opportunities to develop self-reliance and human values. Once people understand their own historical situation, they can work out their own salvation. Furthermore, for a long-term progress an individual development of culture is to be encouraged. The swami was particularly worried about the degradation of women in India. He is emphatic that women must be educated, for he believes that it is mainly women who mould future generations and hence the destiny of a country. In Swamiji's educational scheme for India, the uplift of women and the masses received the highest priority.

A noticeable change in present-day education is that it prepares individuals for a new type of emerging society. Swamiji has envisioned a society comprised of a new type of human being in whom knowledge, action, work, and concentration of the mind are harmoniously blended; he consequently proposes his concept of education for achieving this goal. The right to education, guaranteed by the Constitution of India, is Swamiji's dream. His idea of an uninterrupted education for all has already been adopted in many countries. And it is our hope that India will also achieve in the near future a true and worthy mass education, an education that reaches the weak and the underprivileged section of society as well.



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Svarajya Siddhih: Attaining Self-dominion

Gangadharendra Saraswati

Translated from Sanskrit and annotated by Swami Narasimhananda

(Continued from the July issue)

The Process of Action

OBJECTION: What is the process of action? When a person hears the sentence 'bring the pot', the thought 'I have been appointed to bring that pot, this is my action' arises in the person's mind and an intention to action also arises. Since there is no person in the Vedas, it is *apūrva*, an invisible power that conceives the action.

Reply: No, it is not so. Generally actions are performed because of a desire or intention to perform an action. This intention arises due to two kinds of knowledge; these are: *iṣṭasādhana-tā-jñānam*, the knowledge of the object attaining which the desired result can be obtained; and *kṛtisādhya-tā-jñānam*, the knowledge that that object can be obtained by human effort. It is established that even the desire to follow Vedic injunctions arises only by having these two types of knowledge. Therefore, it is useless to attribute

different meanings to the process of action. Even if such a different meaning is attributed to this process, we see that a person having a strong spirit of renunciation does not perform any Vedic rituals.

There is also the case of Vedic sacrifices like Vishvajit. In the Vedas we find this injunction: '*Viśvajitā yajeta*; the Vishvajit sacrifice should be performed.' However, the result of performing such action is not mentioned here. Without the mention of a result, there is no motive to perform a sacrifice. We find Jaimini saying: '*Ekam vā codanaikatvāt*; in reality only one result follows from it; as the injunction is one only.'⁴³ The meaning of a Vedic injunction does not become complete if it does not include the result of the injunction. Hence here, in the case of the Vishvajit sacrifice, we need to introduce the word *svargakāma*, desirous of attaining heaven. However, we can attribute only one result to a Vedic

injunction, as that itself will make it complete. Attributing more than one result to a Vedic injunction will make it cumbersome. This is also supported by the Jaimini sutra: ‘*Sa svargah syāt sarvān pratyaviśiṣṭatvāt*; that one result would be heaven as that is equally desirable for all’ (4.3.15).

Therefore, it is established that in sacrifices like Vishvajit, where the result is not expressly mentioned, their performance leads to heaven. Here too we see that there is a person who attributes this meaning. Also, when one becomes aware of one’s true nature or realizes Brahman, all desire to perform actions dissipates, and one becomes incapable of performing actions. Similarly, if a person is prevented from performing actions by a strong force, no action can be done. In all these cases *iṣṭasādhana-tā-jñānam* and *kṛtisādhya-tā-jñānam* go away; this position is agreed by all. It is maintained by the Mimamsakas that since a sacrifice that is finished or gets destroyed produces results in the form of attainment of heaven much later, we should necessarily introduce a factor called *apūrva*, an invisible power, just like a door, and this is brought about by Vedic injunctions in the optative mood *liñ*. By the line of argument given above to prove that actions are done only by persons, this introduction of *apūrva* can also be set aside.

Even if we were to introduce *apūrva*, it does not necessarily prove the existence of the desire to perform actions. The obeying or violating of the commands of the master leads to the happiness or anger of the master in the realm of maya. Similar is the case with the service of kings and the like. The happiness or anger of the king or the master leads to reward or punishment for the servant. Here also the results of actions of the servant do not occur immediately after the action but later. However, there is no necessity to introduce *apūrva*. Similarly, there is no need to introduce *apūrva* in the case of Vedic injunctions.

Bhāvanā: Creative Energy

Mimamsakas have the concept of *bhāvanā*, creative energy. *Bhāvanā* means a particular activity of a *bhāvayitā*, productive agent, which is conducive or favourable to the coming into being or production of that which is to come into being, that is, an effect. *Bhāvanā* is of two types: *śābdī bhāvanā*, verbal creative energy, and *ārthī bhāvanā*, actual creative energy.

Let us take the help of an example. Yajnadatta orders his son Devadatta to bring a cow. On hearing this order, an inclination to do an action that would result in bringing the cow, arises in Devadatta’s mind. He then makes an effort to bring the cow. This incident can be looked at from two different perspectives, from that of Yajnadatta and that of Devadatta. Yajnadatta wants his son to have an inclination to bring the cow. This mental activity of wanting an inclination to arise is the *bhāvanā* here and is called the *śābdī bhāvanā*. On the other hand, Devadatta listens to his father’s order and wants the action of bringing the cow to be fulfilled. This desire of the cow being brought is the *bhāvanā* here and is called the *ārthī bhāvanā*.

In the case of a Vedic injunction the *śābdī bhāvanā* is the intention of the Vedic sentence giving the injunction. But there is no person who has this intention, as the Vedas are *apauruṣeya*, not originated from a person, and hence the Mimamsakas hold that the intention of the Vedic injunction resides in the optative mood itself. Using the logic adopted while setting aside the concept of *apūrva*, we can set aside the concept of *śābdī bhāvanā* residing in the Vedic sentence.

Thus, we find that *iṣṭasādhana-tā-jñānam* and *kṛtisādhya-tā-jñānam* quash each other. Also, the optative mood *liñ* does not support these two kinds of knowledge, and we perceive a mutual contradiction here. The optative mood conforms to experience and to the connection between the

root word and its meaning. Similarly, actions like sacrifices are accomplished through human effort, and no sentence can mean action in itself. The lamentation of Mimamsakas calling Vedanta a desert amidst the Vedas is nothing but the display of unhappiness upon defeat.

By this line of argument, the group who—by adding the words ‘to be worshipped thus’ to the *mahāvākyas*, great Vedic sentences—believe that worship leads to liberation, are defeated. Further, there are methods of meditation in the Vedas like the *pañcāgni vidyā*, of the *Chhandogya Upanishad*,⁴⁴ through which a person bound by the cycle of transmigration visualizes release from this cycle. Since this kind of meditation is possible and is sanctioned by the Vedas, it is not necessary to posit worship of Brahman, which is nothing but *sat*, absolute existence. Such an interpretation will lead to the error of *vākyabheda doṣa*. This error occurs when it is possible to interpret a sentence as having a single idea or proposition and yet two ideas or propositions are attributed to it. To avoid this error Vedanta refrains from holding that Brahman can be worshipped. In reality, the worshipping of Brahman by a jiva who is bound by the cycle of transmigration and assumes an attitude of the liberated does not do any good. It is just like the mixing of copper and mercury leading to a combination appearing like gold. However, a cup made of such combination cannot be used for the purpose of drinking, as mercury is poison. In the *Kena Upanishad* it is said: ‘Know that alone to be Brahman, and not what people worship as an object.’⁴⁵ By this Vedic statement the possibility of the worshipped object being Brahman has been forcefully refuted, and the error arising out of the erroneous introduction of words to Vedic sentences has been struck at its source.

Prasankhyāna: Continuous Meditation

Some hold that the *mahāvākyas* produce only

relational and mediate knowledge but cannot apprehend Brahman. It is just like the knowledge obtained from an ordinary sentence. *Prasankhyāna*, continuous meditation, on these sentences gives rise to another kind of knowledge, which is non-relational and immediate, and this knowledge destroys *avidyā*, ignorance. Some hold this continuous meditation or contemplation to be an injunction in itself, called *prasankhyāna vidhi*. This cannot be, since the knowledge of Brahman is not conditioned by the *puruṣa-tantra*, will of an agent, but by the *vastu-tantra*, reality of the object. The knowledge of Brahman is conditioned by another knowledge *viśaya-pramāṇa-tantra*, which destroys ignorance, and Brahman is self-revealed. Therefore, there is no necessity of an injunction. Injunctions are applicable in matters where there is the volition of a person who *shakyaḥ*, can; *kartum*, do; *akartum*, not do; or *anyatha kartum*, do differently. However, the knowledge of Brahman is self-revealing and is *viśaya-pramāṇa*, and if it arises, it cannot be restrained by even a thousand injunctions. Similarly, if this knowledge does not arise, it cannot be created by a thousand injunctions. Needless to say, injunctions that speak of attaining the impossible, like the crossing of an ocean by swimming, are like a sharp blade that becomes blunt on striking a stone, and are useless. Hence, even if one is firmly resolved or takes special efforts to practise the austerities of worshipping Brahman, its knowledge cannot be attained in that manner. Therefore, the worship of Prana and the like can be done in conjunction with the performance of actions, but it cannot go hand in hand with the knowledge of Brahman.

(To be continued)

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43. *Mimamsa Sutra*, 4.3.14.
44. See *Chhandogya Upanishad*, 5.4.1 to 5.10.10.
45. *Kena Upanishad*, 1.5–9.

REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



Holy Trio and Their Mission

Swami Bhajanananda

Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore,
Chennai 600 004. Website: www.chennai.math.org. 2012. vi + 170 pp.
₹ 50.

Swami Bhajanananda's book is a concise life-sketch of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda. Also included are brief accounts of monastic and lay disciples of the Holy Trio and a synoptic view of the ideology of the Ramakrishna Order. The book is essentially a bird's-eye view of an exciting phase of the Ramakrishna movement. It can be regarded as an introduction to the extensive and ever-growing literature on the Holy Trio and their disciples. This introduction is treated with marvellous precision and passion. A noteworthy merit is the epigrammatic statements of the main teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, and Swamiji at the end of the respective chapters.

The book can be an important factor in understanding the ideology of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. The following seven principles, according to the author, are woven into the movement's body: (i) God-realization is the ultimate goal of life, (ii) potential divinity of the soul, (iii) synthesis of the yogas, (iv) morality based on strength, (v) harmony of religions, (vi) avatarhood of Sri Ramakrishna, and (vii) a new philosophy of work. Towards the end the author states: 'The emblem of the Ramakrishna Order designed by Swami Vivekananda is a unique and unparalleled work of art created by one of the richest minds in contemporary history in an exalted mood of spiritual inspiration' (165). The meaning of the mystic emblem, as expounded by Swamiji, is then explained. In the last chapter the author speaks of the five streams of the Ramakrishna Order, which have Sri Ramakrishna for

their fountainhead. The first and main stream of the movement consists of the twin institutions of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission with their worldwide branches; the second stream is constituted by nuns of the Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission; the third stream is the multitude of lay devotees; the fourth stream embraces the numerous ashramas, societies, and institutions professing allegiance to the ideals of the Holy Trio, but functioning independently; the fifth stream comprises the vast community of student-devotees influenced by the teachings of the Holy Trio and also the masses of seekers searching for the right spiritual message.

The book is informative and educative, and in a way is also a confluence of five streams: sanctity of subject, sublimity of thoughts, sincerity of purpose, spontaneity of expression, and simplicity of style.

N Hariharan
Madurai



The Gītā: In Rhymed English Verse with Full Sanskrit Text

Sibaprasad Dutta

SriKrishna Books, 395 Ramakrishna
Palli, Sonarpur, Kolkata 700 150.
2008. 360 pp. ₹ 495.

We seek happiness and avoid pain, but spend all our energy in pursuing things that rob us of our happiness. Is life, which is so precious, meant for such foolish pursuits in the wrong direction? In today's world, when humankind is faced with the disease of multiple external crises and emptiness inside, the remedy has to be extraordinary. The Bhagavadgita is a comprehensive philosophy of life and meant for all types of personalities. It is, however, definitely not meant for the lazy and the sensual but for those who

struggle for a higher life. There are some who merely read and chant the Gita but do not have a clear conception of the scripture. There are others who pay mere lip service but have not moulded their life according to its precepts. Such people take an armchair view of the Gita, which teaches that intense heroic activity is to be performed with perfect mental equanimity.

Although the Gita was taught by Sri Krishna thousands of years ago, its relevance is still profound and valid to today's humanity. It tells us that real happiness will be obtained when we know, even intellectually, our own immortal nature. Arjuna's dilemma on the battlefield of Kurukshetra is also our dilemma, as we stand and fight external and internal negative forces. Taking into account the diversity of people and circumstances, Bhagavan explains the supreme truths accordingly.

The Gita has been interpreted by a galaxy of saints and scholars, from Acharya Shankara to Swami Ranganathananda. It has inspired millions of people, in India and abroad, to understand a sublime philosophy and to make life blessed. The present translation of the Gita in rhymed verse with Sanskrit text is commendable in spreading the message of the scripture. In the preface the author gives a lucid outline of the teachings of the Gita, which is not just a Hindu Shastra but a universal scripture that can be accessed by people of all religions—and even by non-believers. Its lessons are also in accord with the highest aspiration of humanity and yet down to earth and practical. Vision and action must combine, and both must be anchored in God. Truth is eternal, whether in Sanskrit or in English.

Each original shloka, verse, in Devanagari is followed by its transliteration in Roman script and the rhymed translation in English. The Sanskrit of the Gita is polished and perfect, and the author should not have broken the sandhis arbitrarily—it has disrupted the rhythm and beauty of the scripture's language. Care also should have been taken in the transliteration and the translation. A glossary of special terms for those not familiar with the technical language of Indian philosophy, along with an index, would have helped enhance the publication. In spite of the

best intentions of the author, such demerits hamper in spreading the universal message of the Gita.

Prof Amalendu Chakraborty

Former Head, Department of Philosophy,
Presidency College, Kolkata



Paramahansa: A Vedantic Tale

R Subramony

D K Printworld, 'Srikunj', F-52 Bali Nagar, Ramesh Nagar Metro Station, New Delhi 110 015. Website: www.dkprintworld.com. 2011. xiv + 202 pp. ₹ 295.

The book is a window to Indian religious wisdom, customs, and manners. Its primary focus is the relevance of the Upanishads for our times. The fictitious narrator is a seeker of spirituality. The tale begins with his arrival in the city of Madurai in the late twentieth century to study the works of Acharya Shankara and Ramana Maharishi. The narrator then takes the reader on a grand tour of ancient India, which present-day inhabitants are so nostalgic about but many not thoroughly acquainted with. The historical characters and the different philosophies do come alive in the narrative. The book combines seriousness, unique insight, and a modern literary style.

PB

BOOK RECEIVED



Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Stotramāñjarī: A Basket-full of Hymns on the Divine Trio

Swami Harshananda

Sri Nithyananda Prakashana, # 46, 4th Cross, Ashoknagar, BSK 1st Stage, Bengaluru 560 050. 2011. vi + 90 pp. ₹ 15.

Some of the popular hymns of the Ramakrishna Order—addressed to Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda—are now brought out in a new English translation. The original stotras are in Devanagari with their Roman transliteration. The book was first published in Kannada by the learned author.

REPORTS



Interfaith meeting and musical performance at Portland



Commemoration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda

The Central Board of Secondary Education has instructed all of its schools to befittingly celebrate the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda with various events throughout the year.

The following centres organized various programmes to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. **Bhubaneswar:** A two-day programme comprising discourses and devotional singing on 15 and 16 July 2012, attended by about 320 persons daily. **Chengalpattu:** Processions, bhajans, and films on Swamiji at Nethampakkam, Mudukarai, Vilanganur, Kattu-Devatur, Kotamedu, Netrampakkam, and Gurupadamedu on 1, 7, 8, 13, 14, 21, and 22 July respectively. **Chennai Mission Ashrama:** Teachers' convention on 9 June, in which about 200 teachers took part. **Delhi:** In a function held at the centre on 14 July four NGOs were presented with the 'Swami Vivekananda Award', instituted by the ashrama, for their outstanding service to the poor and underprivileged. Institute of Culture, **Gol Park:** In a function held in the Institute on 26 July Sri M K Narayanan, governor of West Bengal, released four books on the Swami Vivekananda's life and teachings, one each in Assamese, Bengali, Nepali, and Oriya, published by the print-media committee constituted for the commemoration of the 150th birth anniversary of Swamiji. Sri Partha Chatterjee, minister for Commerce and Industries of West Bengal, was the chief guest and Swami Bhajananda, Assistant Secretary, Ramakrishna

Math and Ramakrishna Mission, presided over the meeting. **Khetri:** Youth convention on 19 and 20 July, in which about 200 persons, mainly students and teachers of various colleges in Jhunjhunu district, took part. **Port Blair:** Talks on the life and teachings of Swamiji in 10 schools in July, attended by about 4,800 students in all. **Pune:** Conventions for teachers, corporate executives, youths, and devotees on 8, 13, 14, and 15 July respectively, in which about 950 teachers, 250 corporate executives, 330 youths, and 250 devotees took part. **Salem:** Comprehensive value education programmes in the ashrama premises in the months of June and July, in which nearly 1,600 students participated. **Swamiji's Ancestral House:** On the centre's initiative an institution in north Kolkata organized a seminar on 7 July on 'Swami Vivekananda in Today's Perspective'. Vedanta Society of **Portland (USA)** conducted an interfaith meeting in its retreat centre at Scappoose on 4 July. The programme also included a musical performance, reading from Swamiji's writings, and a video presentation on *Swami Vivekananda in the West*. Vedanta Society of **New York (USA)** observed the first phase of the celebration on 4 July at Ridgely Manor. About 150 devotees and a few monastics attended the programme, which included talks, meditation, prayer, and a drama.

Headquarters

On 1 July Swami Suhitananda, General Secretary,

Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the parking area, set up by the Eastern Railway on the western side of GT Road opposite to Belur Math. In order to protect the temple of Sri Ramakrishna at Belur Math from vehicular pollution, visitors' vehicles are now to park in this new area.

News from Branch Centres

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Puri, served lemonade and drinking water to about 25,000 pilgrims during the Ratha Yatra festival and treated 93 patients in the medical camp organized on this occasion. The centre also served lemonade to about 450 pedestrians per day throughout the summer season.

Ramakrishna Math, Pune, conducted a free medical camp at Pandharpur from 26 to 30 June on the occasion of Ashadhi Ekadashi Yatra; nearly 2,500 pilgrims were treated for various ailments.

The renovated building housing the Holy Mother shrine at **Ramakrishna Math, Mumbai**, was inaugurated on 3 July.

Relief


Distress Relief • The following centres distributed various items, shown against their names, to needy people. **Limbdī**: School uniforms to 204 students on 10 July. **Belgaum**: 5,106 notebooks and 851 pens among 851 students from 9 to 14 July. **Ulsoor**: 109,000 notebooks, 25,000 pens, 16,000 pencils, 16,000 erasers, 7,500 geometry boxes, 6,000 dictionaries, 2,300 slates, and other items among 16,900 students of 185 schools and colleges in 141 villages from 7 June to 7 July. **Naora**: 500 kg rice and 50 kg dal to needy people, and 500 books among 43 needy students last month. **Taki**: 30 saris, 25 dhotis, 60 towels, 50 bed-sheets, 140 mosquito nets, 10 blankets, 100 nail-cutters, 100 bottles of antiseptic liquid, and 315 sets of toiletries from April to July.

Drought Relief • **Pune** centre continued its drought relief work in Ahmednagar district; about 77,000 residents of 30 villages in the district were

Relief work
in Assam



supplied with nearly 4,863,000 litres of drinking water last month. **Malda** centre sunk 3 tube-wells, one each in 3 drought-affected villages, namely Sishabari, Mihirdas and Shyamdasgukur, in Malda district. 'Vivekananda Sarovar' in Arita under Purulia Block II, excavated by **Purulia** centre with financial support from the Government of West Bengal, was inaugurated on 16 July.

Flood Relief • In the wake of the devastating floods caused by heavy rains and breach of dams, which affected hundreds of families in upper Assam, **Itanagar** centre conducted primary relief work and a general health camp on 8 July, and distributed 2,195 kg rice, 383 kg dal, 121 kg chira, 400 kg potatoes, 10 kg soybean, 65 kg mustard oil, 27 kg gur, 405 kg salt, 676 packets of biscuits, 109 packets of candles, 100 packets of mosquito repellent coils, 600 matchboxes, 109 soap bars, 40 kg detergent powder, assorted garments, and medicines among 1,000 flood-affected people of Sooteia in Sonitpur district. **Narottam Nagar** centre distributed 5,000 tarpaulin sheets to an equal number of flood-affected families at Majuli Island and Kaliapani in Jorhat district, and also distributed 512 blankets, 256 mosquito nets, 256 lanterns, 2,600 packets of biscuits, and 256 utensil-sets (each set containing 1 cooking pot, 1 saucepan, 1 khunti, 1 ladle, 2 plates, 2 tumblers, and 1 pot for storing water, and other items) to 256 families belonging to Tengabari village of Panitola block in Dibrugarh district. **Guwahati** centre arranged three medical camps in Kamrup district—two at Rangia and one at Sonapur—in which altogether 1,053 patients were treated; besides, nearly one lakh halogen tablets were supplied to the villagers of Rangia and Sonapur blocks in Kamrup district and Hojai in Nagaon district. The centre also distributed 100 saris and 50 dhotis to flood-affected people in Rangia. **Nadi** (Fiji) centre continued its flood relief work. The centre further distributed varieties of high-quality imported vegetable seeds among 2,361 farmers in 6 districts of the country. 

Kamarpukur and Jayrambati

by Swami Tejasananda



Sri Ramakrishna and his consort, Sri Sarada Devi, were prophets, unparalleled in the history of spirituality, who have left us a legacy of religious harmony and love much needed in the present era. The places where they were born, Kamarpukur and Jayrambati, bear witness to the unique phenomenon of their lives—lives of intense spiritual realization and universal love. The soil, stones, trees, air, and streams of these two pilgrimage centres continue to remind us that here once walked divinities on earth. These places invite us to take a dip in the ocean of spirituality and merge with the source of infinite bliss. This book is a combined edition of two booklets, Holy Kamarpukur and Holy Jayrambati, published by the centres of the Ramakrishna Order at Kamarpukur and Jayrambati.

Pages: 76 | Packing & Postage: ₹ 30 | Price: ₹ 50

Ancient Sages

by Swami Satyamayananda

While the present generation works hard for a better future, we should not forget our glorious past and spiritual legacy, as it is pride in our ancestors that inspires us to strive to create a better country for those coming after us. That is why we need to become familiar with the lives of these ancient sages, and it is also why we should pass on this legacy to the coming generations. It is with this in mind that we present this book to our readers. Indian mythology is replete with accounts of sages and seers, so some of these stories have been presented here in a short form.



Pages 224 | Price ₹ 60
Packing & Postage: ₹ 35

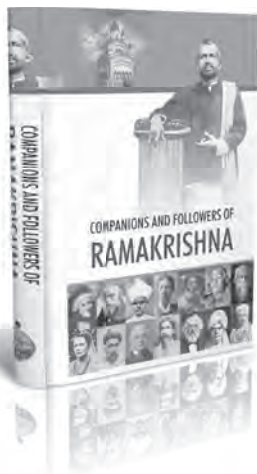


Please write to:

ADVAITA ASHRAMA, 5 Dehi Entally Road, Kolkata 700 014, India

Phones: 91-33-22644000 / 22640898 / 22866483, E-mail: mail@advaitaashrama.org

Companions and Followers of Ramakrishna

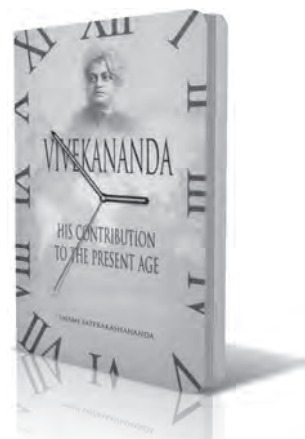


This book contains brief information about 1273 persons who were either companions or followers of Ramakrishna. Some of them do not categorically belong to these two groups and can be said to be mere acquaintances. Its importance lies in the fact that, along with the important ones it also keeps before us information about many a lesser known characters from Ramakrishna's life as well as about his later followers. Released on the occasion of the 175th birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna it will facilitate serious readers who want to know especially about the lesser-known characters which find mention in Ramakrishna's literature as well as tradition.

Pages: 696 | Packing & Postage: ₹ 40 | Price: ₹ 220

Vivekananda *His Contribution to the Present Age* by Swami Satprakashananda

Swami Vivekananda is a name which brings to us the images of a saint, a prophet, a reformer, a humanist, and much more. Translating the teachings of his master Sri Ramakrishna, into philosophy and precept, the Swami shifted the focus of religion from celestial beings to human beings. The true significance of his work is brought home to us only when we see his work on the larger timeline of the religio-philosophical history of the world. This is precisely what Swami Satprakashananda does in this volume and thus effectively delineates the contribution of Swami Vivekananda to the present age.



Pages 282 | Price ₹ 85
Packing & Postage: ₹ 35



Please write to:

ADVAITA ASHRAMA, 5 Dehi Entally Road, Kolkata 700 014, India

Phones: 91-33-22644000 / 22640898 / 22866483, E-mail: mail@advaitaashrama.org